





# How visual artists find employment in the Finnish game industry

Nelly Sääksjärvi

Master's Thesis 2015

Media Lab

Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture



---

**Author** Nelly Sääksjärvi

---

**Title of thesis** How visual artists find employment in the Finnish game industry

---

**Department** Department of Media

---

**Degree programme** New Media Design and Production

---

**Year** 2015

**Number of pages** 66

**Language** English

---

**Abstract**

The aim of this Master's thesis was to study the various ways artists in Finland get employed and finding possible quantifiable patterns in methods of achieved employment. The subjects of the thesis are the game artists in Finland who are currently working or have worked in the industry. The thesis illustrates how game artists in Finland acquired their first job, as well as how the artists use their portfolio, connections and education as tools when applying for a job. In addition, the profile of a typical game artists is depicted. The purpose of this thesis is not only to find the answers for employment, but also to make artists a more visible segment of the game industry.

The research consisted of 7 semi-structured interviews conducted with artists. Additionally, 90 artists participated in a survey. The interviews consisted of 4 themes along with 11 questions. The survey was structured with 9 questions. Furthermore, the author studied a great deal of literature that had been written about the game industry and its employees. In this thesis, the findings are seen from an artist's point of view, rather than the game companies perspective.

As a result of the research, the most common ways for artists in to obtain a job in the Finnish game industry was presented. Consequently, the artists opinions and usage of the portfolio, connections and education were placed out and the profile of the typical game artists was identified. Similarities with the literature was found, but also contrasts and new findings. The results of the research can be adapted by artists in the beginning of their careers and also by those who are interested in the occupation of a game artist. This thesis helps the artists to understand the power behind the combination of a solid portfolio and connections, with education as a supportive component.

---

**Keywords** game artist, Finnish game industry, employment

---



# Index

1. Introduction .....	13
2. The Finnish game industry .....	17
2.1 From the demo scene to mobile games .....	17
2.2. Current situation .....	18
2.3. Game education in Finland .....	19
3. Working for the game industry .....	21
3.1 Game industry employee - a profile .....	21
3.2. Defining the role of a game artist .....	24
3.3. Portfolio - an artist's most powerful tool .....	26
3.4. The power of networking .....	26
3.5. Does an artist need an education? .....	27
4. Research compilation .....	29
4.1 Semi-structured interviews .....	30
4.2. Survey .....	31
4.3. Realization and analysis of the participants for the interviews and survey .....	31
4.5. Reliability and validity of the study .....	33
5. How visual artists find employment in the Finnish game industry .....	35
5.1. Interviews: the research group and their backgrounds .....	35
5.1.1. Artists' experiences of getting to the game industry .....	37
5.1.2. Importance of the portfolio .....	40
5.1.3. Advantages and disadvantages of connections .....	41
5.1.4. Education: not for everyone .....	43
5.2. Survey results .....	44
5.2.1 Profile of a typical game artist .....	44
5.2.2. Getting the first job .....	46
5.2.3. Difficulties in getting employed .....	49
6. Discussion .....	53
7. Conclusion .....	57
References .....	61
Appendices .....	64





# List of tables

- Table 1.** The gender division in the game industry (IGDA, 2014)
- Table 2.** The educational level of game industry employees (IGDA, 2014)
- Table 3.** Regular hours worked vs. crunch hours (IGDA, 2014)
- Table 4.** Demographic of the interviewees
- Table 5.** The gender division of the survey participants
- Table 6.** The age distribution of the survey participants
- Table 7.** The educational level of the survey participants
- Table 8.** Occupation of the survey participants
- Table 9.** The survey participants' years of experience in the game industry
- Table 10.** How the survey participants got their first job at a game company
- Table 11.** Useful factors when applying for a job
- Table 12.** The percentage of the survey participants, who have at some point been unemployed
- Table 13.** Factors that have made it harder to find employment
- Table 14.** The female participants were more uncertain about their skills than the male participants



# Acknowledgements

This work has been a journey enriched by the presence of people.

I want to thank everyone involved in this work for their time, knowledge and fruitful discussion. They are the people of Media Lab and my colleagues from Rovio. Special thanks for my supervisor Miikka Junnila.

Thank you, Ralf, for your permanent support from the very beginning. Thank you, Maria, for your feedback and for always expecting the best from me. Special thanks to Ville for doing the layout of this work.

I also want to express my gratitude to the artists that participated in the interviews and survey. This whole study is about you.



# Introduction

# 1.

This is the time to work in the Finnish game industry! The industry is expanding with successful companies such as Supercell (Clash of Clans) and Rovio (Angry Birds), bringing more investment to the industry. Today, Finland is marketed as a nation full of skillful developers making successful, top quality games. As stated by Neogames (2014, p. 3): “The game industry is now a key component in Finland’s exports and economy, with well over 90% of the production exported.” Finland’s game industry rivals the profit margins of well-established Finnish media, such as films. The growth has created more occupations than ever, incentivizing educational institutes to launch new game related programs. The success stories of the game companies have increased the interest in the industry and many are dreaming of working in the game industry.

One-fifth of the Finnish game industry employees are artists (Roininen, 2013). An artist is a person who is

responsible of the visual art of a game. Even though the game industry has become one of the fastest growing industries in Finland, there is no research made of the artists’ occupations in the industry. In American literature (see Adams 2003; Brathwaite and Schreibe 2012; Kennedy 2012), the methods of getting employed in the game industry are covered in example stories of employers, with all positions in mind. The International Game Developers Association [IGDA] was the first organization to research the issues concerning the employees’ poor working conditions in the game industry. The main focus of their research was the problems facing employees at companies, such as long working hours and work related stress. While IGDA surveys are global, most of the respondents are from North America.

Finnish literature (see Kuorikoski, 2014; Saarikoski, 2004) mostly covers the history of the domestic demo scene, related education and the potential of the industry. Some studies focus on women, such as Anttila’s (2014) article of Women in

the Finnish game industry. Roininen's (2013, p. 56) research reveals that although employees are generally satisfied with their jobs, they are not appreciated by their company, and are lacking "... mentoring, work orientation and shared experiences with the industry veterans". Even though new game courses are launched in Finnish universities, the educational degree of the current game artists and their attitude towards education is not known. It is commonly known that artists have difficulties in getting employed, in contrast to programmers, who are desperately needed in many companies. Evidently, there is a need to know more about the careers of artists in the Finnish game industry.

The purpose of this study is to find out the various ways artists in Finland become employed and find possible quantifiable patterns in methods of achieved employment. I will thus focus on an occupational group that has not received a great deal of research attention. Since there are many foreigners working in the Finnish game industry, I did not want to limit the research subject to only take in consideration Finnish citizens, but also include people from other countries. I conducted this research through semi-structured interviews and a short, structured survey. By conducting this study, I hope that artists will become a more visible segment of the game industry, because after all, they are a key part of the future of the Finnish game industry.

I will focus on the following questions: 1) *How do artists get employed in the Finnish game industry?* As in other fields, there are no right or wrong ways of getting employed. Because there are no strict rules, people want to find out if there are more ways of getting employed and are typically curious to hear how others got their jobs. I was also interested in hearing artists' thoughts about the role of an artist's portfolio, education and connections. This brings up my second research question: 2) *How do the artists use their portfolio, connections and education as tools when applying for a job?* I will also briefly review the various traits of job seeking and employed artists, by asking them about their background, early career plans and how they think others became employed into the industry.

Personally, I have always been curious of how people get employed. I see employment not as linear action, such as just sending an application and hoping for the best, but as a cascading path with stages and factors affecting the whole application process: contacts, the ability to sell oneself to the employer or even a persuasive personality. Most of my friends, from the two universities where I studied at (Metropolia and Aalto), are artists of some sort. Since we are all around the same age, most of us are in the same stage of our careers: in the very beginning. Several have found their dream jobs, but many are unemployed, or have gotten laid off. The discussions between us are often work related and

how to get a job. When studying with some of these friends at Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, I noticed that many were missing a proper online portfolio with their work. Motivated by this, I wrote my Bachelor's Thesis about how to build a portfolio. Digging deeper to the application process of artists was a natural step for me, and the idea of researching how artists get employed in the Finnish game industry formed in my mind.

The overall structure of the study takes the form of seven chapters, including this introductory chapter. Chapter 2 begins with a brief history of the Finnish game industry and goes through how the past has affected today's game industry in Finland. The game education that is currently offered in Finland will also be covered. When studying the artists of the game industry, it is important to understand the culture of the companies and employees. Thus, the third chapter introduces the game industry culture, the artists and their tools when applying for a job. The main questions addressed here are: what is the role and level of importance of an artist's portfolio, connections and education? Therefore, chapter 2 and 3 are the literature review of this study. Chapter 4 is concerned with the methodology used for this study, the realization and analysis of the interviews and survey, addressing the validity of this study. Here, I explain in detail, how the interviews and survey were conducted. The fifth chapter presents the results of the research, focusing on the themes found in the gathered data. Chapter 6 analyses the results by comparing them with the literature presented in chapter two and three. It also includes a discussion of the implication of the findings to future research into this area. Finally, the conclusion gives a brief summary and critique of the findings.







# The Finnish game industry 2.

Since this study explores the artists' employment in Finland, it is necessary to briefly describe Finland's game history and how it has evolved in what we today call the Finnish game industry. As education is often tied to the industry, this chapter also includes an introduction of the game related education offered in Finland.

## 2.1. From the demo scene to mobile games

Over the past 10 years, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of game companies in Finland. Almost 70% of the currently existing companies are less than five years old (Neogames, 2015). International media has also acknowledged the growth, and nowadays it is not surprising to see articles and news about Finnish game companies' success and growth. While the success came suddenly, there is much more history to it.

The growth could be explained by Finland's technology

driven industry, which has its roots in the strong gaming culture. Kuorikoski (2014), Wilhelmsson (2014) and Saarikoski (2004) discuss the importance of the early game enthusiasts in Northern Europe's game history. In the 1990's, Finland's computer hobbyists had a very active demo scene, with Commodore 64, a commercial home computer, as the most popular platform (Kuorikoski, 2014). As Wilhelmsson (2014) explains, a demo is a program, that presents audiovisual content, with the purpose to demonstrate the producer's skills such as programming, art and music skills. He continues by stating that it all started from crackers<sup>1</sup>, who installed demos on computer games to boast to others of their successful crack. The demo would play as an intro while the game

---

<sup>1</sup> A person who uses software cracking to modify a program, such as a game. Not to be confused with hackers, who seek and exploit weaknesses in computer systems or networks.

## 2.2. Current situation

was loading, usually containing flashing animation and music (ibid.,). As a sub-culture phenomena, it was important for the crackers to stand out and be different (Saarikoski, 2004). Eventually, crackers started to compete in having the coolest intros, which led to teams of crackers being formed and demo-parties arranged, where people did meet to compete, but also to learn from each other (Wilhelmsson, 2014). The first Assembly<sup>1</sup> was held in 1992 and is today one of the world's biggest demo-parties (Saarikoski, 2004).

Kuorikoski (2014) highlights Commandore 64 as a good platform for making games, especially for smaller groups or even one person, which lead to its popularity. The transition from making demos to making games was natural, and demo hobbyists were even asked to make games, since the best demo intros were technically even better than the games (ibid.,). Companies were founded to make games, but went quickly bankrupt since there was no market (ibid.,). However, Kurokoski continues, the enthusiasts kept on refining their skills and in the 1990's, they established companies such as Housemarque and Remedy which still exist today. Similarly, Wilhelmsson (2014) presents successful Swedish game companies such as King, founded by early game hobbyists. Remedy's release of Max Payne in 2001, is seen as one of the milestones in Finnish game history, as it was successful and gained more mainstream attention than ever (Saarikoski and Suominen, 2009).

*Through Nokia, the mobile game expertise has been here already since the 2000s. The rest of the world has woken up to this just in the last couple of years. We already have people who are experts. Nowhere in the world have these things been done for so long. (Petri Järvillehto, cited in Kuorikoski, 2014, p. 246)*

Apple's release of the iPhone and global AppStore started the rise of the Finnish mobile games. Granqvist (2004) emphasizes that Nokia's (Finnish mobile company) launch to the mobile game industry created the fundamentals to Finland's mobile entertainment development. A strong foundation of developers that Nokia had created during their prosperous years saw the perfect opportunity in Apple's platform. It became financially easier for small companies to reach a bigger audience. The Finnish game industry was brought to a completely new level when Rovio's Angry Birds got released 2009 and reached millions of downloads (Kuorikoski, 2014).

Currently, there are approximately 260 game companies in Finland and a big part (38%) of them are situated in the capital area of Finland (Neogames, 2015). While the games are made in Finland, most of the users are located in United States and Western Europe (Neogames, 2011). Evidently, mobile platforms such as phones and tablets are the most popular for Finnish game companies (ibid.,). The required technology for mobile games is manageable for a small team and serves as a good starting point for startups. It is even possible for one person alone to make a successful mobile game. One well known example is developer Toni Fingerroos' game Hill Climb Racing, that became suddenly popular in 2012 and quickly became number one on the free games chart in the iOS App Store in United States.

The growth has also resulted in more positions available in the industry. With less than 10 companies in the late 1990's, the Finnish game industry consists now of more than 2500 employees (Neogames, 2015). The typical Finnish game studio is still relatively small, with an average of 16 employees (Neogames, 2011). The increasing amount of employees can be seen as a reaction from the growing turnover. According to Neogames (2014), game development and services of Finnish games business' revenue grew by 260% in one year, resulting in a turnover of €900 million in 2013. This growth has hugely affected the employment situation in the industry.

To sum it up, it might seem that the success of the Finnish game industry came suddenly, but in reality it took many years to build. First, there were the game enthusiasts, who are still today very close and actively sharing ideas at events and online. Secondly, Nokia growth resulted in more local development in mobile gaming — a foundation that is seen as the seed of the Finnish game industry. Third, Apple's awaited platform that gave the opportunity for developers to ship directly to the users without big teams or financial support. These three factors resulted to the situation we have today: a growing successful game industry!

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.assembly.org/>

### 2.3. Game education in Finland

The growth of the Finnish game industry has also affected game education in Finland and the amount of game related programs have increased. Studying design, art or programming specifically for games has not always been possible. Until now, one would have to settle in studying art or IT programming and develop games as a hobby. Today, the situation is quite different and evolving together with the industry.

In Finland, educational programs related to games, e.g., game design and programming, are offered by vocational colleges, universities of applied sciences and universities. Currently, there are more than 20 educational institutions that provide game education, with most of the institutes located in the capital area of Finland (Neogames, 2015). Bachelor's degrees are usually between 180 and 240 credits, while Master's degrees are 120 credits. There is room for about 300 students each year (Holopainen, 2014). In addition to a new education curriculum, the recruiting training program GamePro<sup>1</sup> was launched in 2009 to train people to specific roles such as Game Programmer, Game Artist and Game Producer. Recently, there are even programs tested and established for leaders in game companies, one of them being Game Executive program by Aalto University Executive Education<sup>2</sup>.

Typical topics covered in the game educations in Finland are programming, 3D, design, game development with various software and animation. While most game programs have courses surveying a wide range of subjects in game development, Kajaani University of Applied Sciences<sup>3</sup> has more specialized courses, such as 3D Game For Mobile Device, Programming Mobile Games and Basics of Game Business. Students are often free to create their own game projects that they will get credits from and often the schools include a course for these projects, e.g., Aalto University's<sup>4</sup> Game Project and Metropolia's<sup>5</sup> Game Innovation Project. Aalto University's Game Executive program stands out by offering management and strategy lectures with professionals, allocated to the existing CEO's in the game

industry who want to develop themselves as leaders.

In 2008, Neogames conducted a research of the Finnish game education and its development needs. According to the results, the job descriptions in games can be divided into five categories: management, production, art, programming and design. Some of these categories lack specialized education such as game programmers. A challenge that education plans should tackle is training in game design. This is hard to teach due to its experience-based knowledge. Despite that, there are plenty of visual artists available, since graphic design and other forms of art have been included in the Finnish education since the 1990's. (Neogames, 2008.)

---

1 <http://game-pro.fi/> [Accessed 7 Feb. 2015]

2 <http://www.aaltoee.fi/> [Accessed 7 Feb. 2015]

3 <http://www.kamk.fi/> [Accessed 7 Feb. 2015]

4 <http://www.aalto.fi/en/> [Accessed 7 Feb. 2015]

5 <http://www.metropolia.fi/en/> [Accessed 7 Feb. 2015]



# Working for the game industry

## 3.

This part of the literature review will identify the typical game employee, but also focus on the role of game artists. Introducing the culture of the game employees is important to see the artist in that environment. Additionally, three major topics that emerged repeatedly in the literature are discussed: the artist's portfolio, the importance of connections within the game industry and the role of an education. An artist's skills are often seen as the most important element when applying for a job — are you qualified enough? However, personal connections also have a huge impact on job seeking, not to mention the charm or personality traits of the artist. Game education is quite a new phenomenon in Finland, and it has gotten criticized for not being on the same pace with the industry. Although these topics are presented in the literature regarding all employees in the industry, this review will primarily focus on the meaning of these features for an artist's employment.

### 3.1. The game industry employee - a profile

The global game industry has experienced an explosive growth in the last 40 years. In the 1970s the games moved from arcades to homes, moving from focused markets to mainstream audience (Saarikoski, 2004). In today's world, anybody with a smartphone has most likely played a mobile game. Who are the people behind these games? What are the characteristics of people working in the game industry?

*Based on the survey findings, the "typical" game development professional can be described as: white, male, heterosexual, not disabled, 31 years old, working in the industry just over five years, university/college educated, is a programmer, artist or designer... (IGDA, 2005, p. 9-10)*

As the quote above illustrates, there is a typical profile of a person working in the game industry. According to Kerr (2010), when

compared to other creative industries, the representation of women has remained very low. This fact is backed up by a report with 3128 industry professionals, conducted by the International Game Developers Association [IGDA], which states that only 11,5% of the game industry employees are female (IGDA, 2005). Most of the IGDA survey participants were from America. A similar survey made by IGDA in 2014 with 2202 game developers, shows a slight increase; 22% of the respondents identified as female (Table 1). Male employees dominate the creative side of game development, such as design, programming and visual development, whereas women are most likely to work in human resources, writing and marketing, public relations and production (ibid., 2005).

As shown in Table 2, nearly 40% of the employees has a university level education, 21% hold graduate degrees and 14% hold college, CEGEP, trade or vocational school diplomas (IGDA, 2014). When asked if the degree is directly related to game development, a third stated that it is, while another third stated that their degree is somewhat relevant to game

design and development. IGDA (2014) notes, that all game industry employees do not directly work in developing the game.

Looking at the professional identity of game employees, Deuze, Martin and Allen (2007) point out that even though the game industries are a bit different around the world, they are constructed the same way. For instance, in every game company there are usually individuals in each position that are needed to make a game. Novak (2008) divides the positions in seven categories: production, design, art, programming, audio, testing and QA and marketing. Secondly, the employees' contracts are often project-based, chosen to be in a specific project rather than having a permanent position (Deuze et al. 2007). However, the core team of the game studio is often permanent, surrounded by fixed term employees and freelancers. Thirdly, the workers are often formed in teams, where everyone has a specific role, such as a game programmer, designer or tester (ibid.,).

As in other cultural industries, the game industry

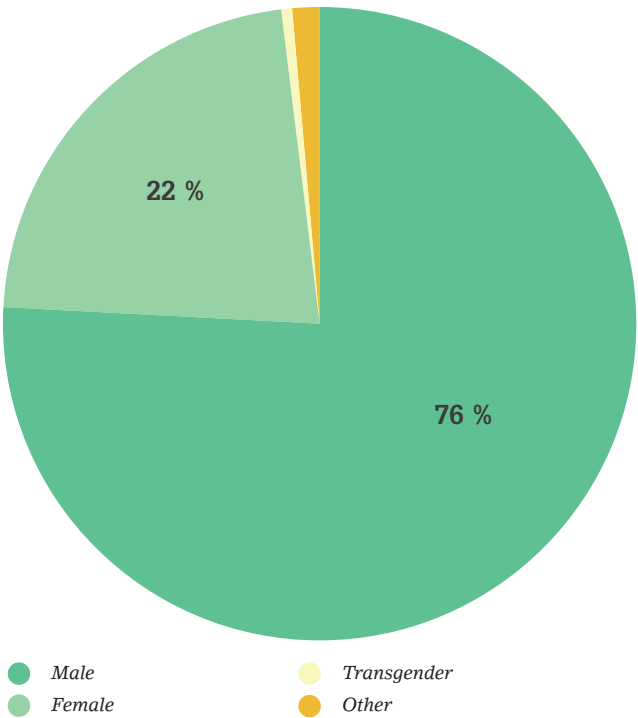


Table 1. The gender division in the game industry (IGDA, 2014)

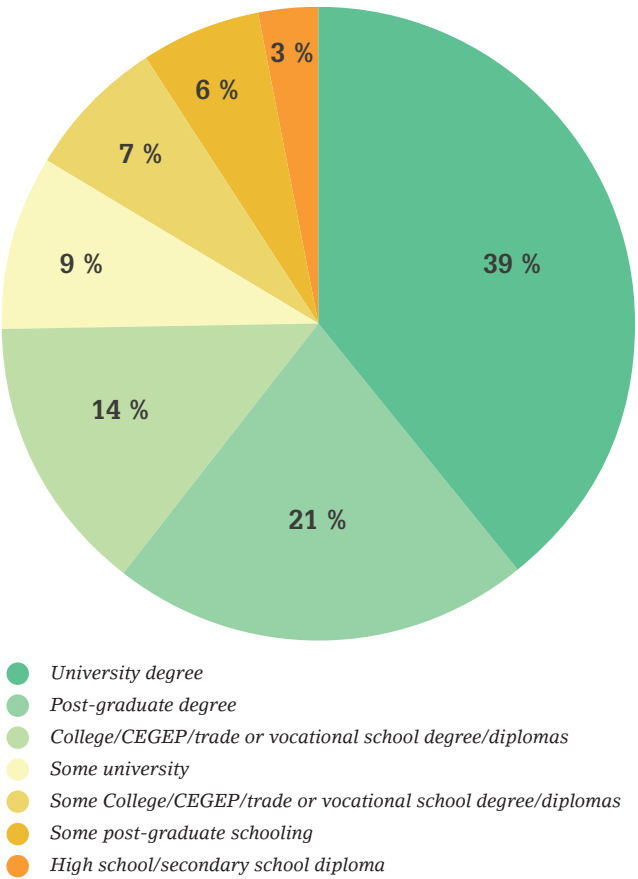


Table 2. The educational level of game industry employees (IGDA, 2014)

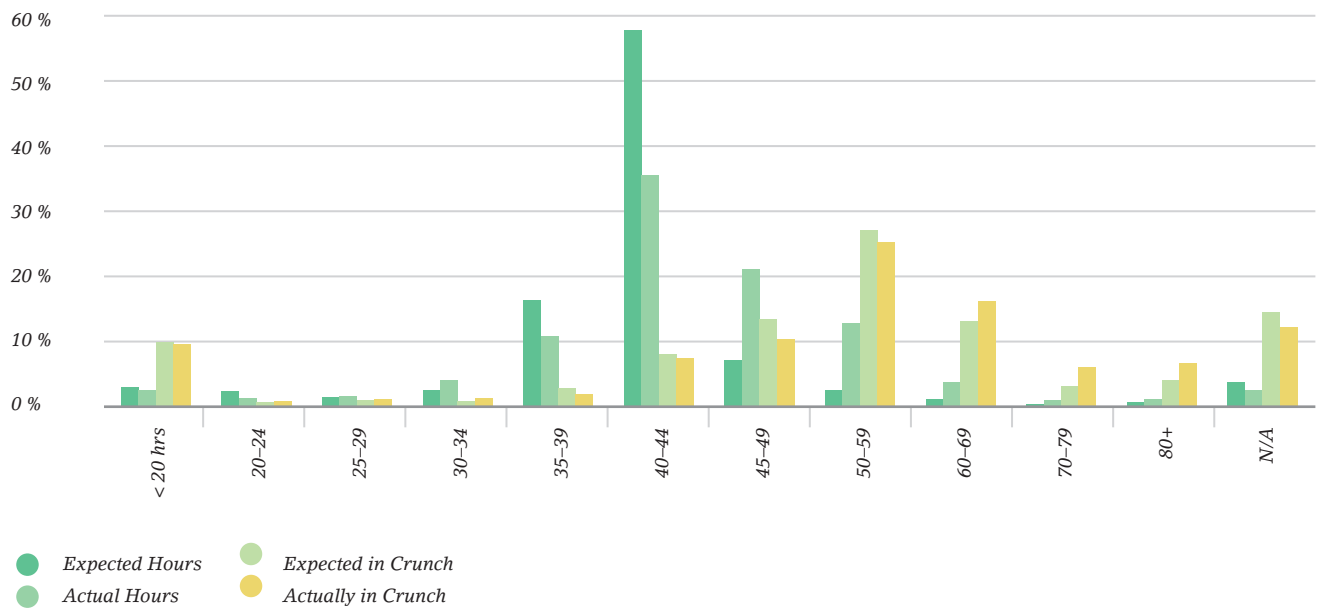


Table 3. Regular hours worked vs. crunch hours (IGDA, 2014)

employees are usually young and eager to learn new skills with flexible working hours (Kerr, 2010). It is usual for a game industry employee to work long hours, especially close to deadlines. In the game industry, this is called ‘crunching’ which can be the last weeks or even months before the game is released (Massey, 2006). According to the IGDA Quality of Life report (2004), 35% of employees answered that they worked 65-80 hours during crunch periods and 46% reported that they did not get any overwork compensation. In 2014 only 19% said that they had not crunched at least ones in the last two years (IGDA, 2014). Table 3 provides an overview of the actual hours versus expected hours in the core distribution range of 35-69 hours per week for both regular and crunch periods. When asked for the reasons for crunch, more than half of the participants answered poor and unrealistic scheduling (ibid., 2014). Kerr (2010) mentions USA, Canada and the UK as examples of poor project planning, leading to very high weekly working hours. The working hours of the industry got even to the news in USA, when the spouse of an Electronic Arts employee made a blog post with the pen name ‘ea\_spouse’ (real name Erin Hoffman), of the dreadful working hours her husband is going through at the game company (Hoffmann, 2004).

During the worst crunch weeks, her husband had to work from 9am to 10pm, seven days a week “with the occasional Saturday evening off for good behavior” (Hoffmann, 2004, p. 1).

Despite long working hours and crunch periods, game industry employees are satisfied with their occupation. In IGDA’s survey (2004), 46% of the respondents chose 7 or 8 out of 10 as the grade for their work, and 16% chose a 9 or a 10. Passion for games is often the reason employees find themselves in the game industry and the reason for them to stay there. Over 80% of the respondents of IGDA’s (2014) survey wanted to “earn a living doing what I enjoy” and “share my passion for games by working in the industry”.

To summarize, the game industry is global, and the occupations are similar around the world. The employee is often hired for a project and a part of a team with a specific task. Most of the employees are men, with around one-fifth being female. Many of these employees have a university level education. Long working hours are usual in the game industry and employers often do not compensate for the overtime. Crunch periods are common in the industry. Regardless of this, the employees are passionate about their work and feel satisfied with their occupations.



## 3.2. Defining the role of a game artist

The position of the game artist is quite new when compared to the age of the game industry. Before artists became a part of the teams, programmers were responsible of the visuals and as well for the audio (Adams, 2003). Today, both small and big game companies have artist roles, in order for the programmer to concentrate on coding. What are the roles of game artists in today's world?

Artists are responsible of the key visuals of the game. As Adams (2003, p. 132) describes it "It's the part of the project that brings the game to the player, that makes an abstract design concrete and visible." The artists work closely with programmers and sound designers to get the code, audio and visuals to work together seamlessly. There are many steps in the process of making the visuals, depending on the game. For instance, the concept artist creates the concept art, before it goes to the next stage, which could be animation (Adams, 2003).

There are various job titles a game artist can have, such as concept artist, environmental artist, 3D artist, animator, user interface artist and marketing artist (see Kennedy 2013; Adams 2003; GameCareerGuide). Depending on the size of the game company, there can also be more specific titles such as 3D character animator, who is specialized in making movements for game characters that are made in 3D. In smaller organizations, an artist could simply be called game artist, even though that role includes doing, e.g., art for the user interface of the game. An artist's role defines the portfolio, since the roles require different skills. The most common job titles according to Kennedy (2013) are:

### CONCEPT ARTIST

The concept artist creates the first sketches from an idea, being the first step of the visual pipeline. The idea can come from a game designer or producer that needs help in visualizing the idea. In the concept stage, it is important to lock the mood and look before going to the next stage. The artist usually has reference materials, such as photographs, to use as inspiration. The concept can be anything; characters, props and buildings.

### 3D ARTIST

The 3D artist usually models characters and props based on the concept art. Here, the two dimensional art is transformed into the 3D world. The goal is to get the model to match the concept, but the artist also has to take in consideration technical aspects, such as how the model is going to act in the game. The 3D artist might also build the rig for a

character, which is a tool the animator uses to move the characters. In some companies, there is a separate person to do this, a rigging artist.

### ENVIRONMENTAL ARTIST

The environmental artist works closely with the concept artist to get an idea of the world the game is played in. The artist has to take into consideration the story and design of the game world, e.g., in a shooting game there is usually lot of hiding places for the player. The environmental artist will then make 3D models of the concepts and put the in the environment accordingly.

### ANIMATOR

The animator makes the movement of the character and other elements in a game. The movement seen on the screen is often combination of many animations transitioning from one to another, making the character or items seem alive. One other type of animation in games are cut scene animations to tell more about the story or function as a narrative in the game.

### USER INTERFACE (UI) ARTIST

The UI artist creates the art that the player interacts with, such as buttons. Thus, the UI artist needs to have a good sense of graphic design. The UI needs to be clear and understandable. With good UI, the player can, without distraction, navigate when playing.

### MARKETING ARTIST

The marketing artist creates the art that is usually the first visuals that the public sees. The marketing artist works together with the brand manager, since the purpose of the marketing art is to sell the game. In smaller companies, the marketing art might be made by other artists.

To sum it up, an artist can have many roles in a company. It is thus crucial for the artists to know which role to aim for, since the portfolios of the artists might need to be different. The focus of the portfolio will be discussed more in detail in the next chapter.



### 3.3. Portfolio - an artist's most powerful tool

A portfolio showcases an artist's works and skills, both creatively and technically. Various artists, such as filmmakers, photographers and animators, should display their work when applying for a position. When applying for an artist position in the game industry, a portfolio is mandatory in the application. With a portfolio, an artist shows the employer what he or she is capable of doing.

Adams (2013) emphasizes, that an artist must have a portfolio where they showcase their skills. Ultimately, artists usually apply for skill-based positions. Thus, employers foremost look at an applicant's portfolio when considering for new talents (Brathwaite and Schreibe, 2012). Since a portfolio has such an impact on an artist's working opportunities, Brathwaite and Schreibe (2012) advise artists to be open to feedback and post their work online for reviews. Sharing and receiving constructive feedback appears to be crucial, if you want to know the value of the portfolio. Clazie (2010) agrees, and adds that knowing your industry is essential when planning your portfolio.

There are many ways for an artist to make his or her portfolio more appealing to the employers. First, not only does an artist need a great portfolio to get work, it also needs to be easily accessible for the employer. Creating an online-portfolio is easy, making it essential for every artist (Brathwaite and Schreibe, 2012). Second, since the portfolio represents the artist, it should only consist of the best works (ibid.,). "You are only as good as your weakest piece" says Brenda Brathwaite (ibid., p. 81), making a point in that adding old or mediocre pieces to fill your portfolio is a poor choice. If the artists dislike his or her own piece, it is seldom liked by the reviewers (Clazie, 2010). Chances are that the artist can get an unpleasant job, if the portfolio does not represent the artists preferences (Digital Tutors). Third, an artist should tailor the portfolio to meet a specific job. If there is not material fitting for the position, it is suggested to start making some new material rather than trying to fill with unsuitable work (Digital Tutors).

There are also many actions to avoid when creating a portfolio. As previously stated, it is not preferable to overload the portfolio. Rather than filling the portfolio with various types of pieces, it is better to stay with less (Keller, 2010). Some artists also take a lot of pressure in creating the layout of the portfolio. Rather than spending time to make the website look good, it is more effective to concentrate on what is inside the portfolio (Digital Tutors). Even though the portfolio has such a significant role in the game industry, many forget to put much thought into it. When one is not actively looking for a job, e.g., when studying or working, building the portfolio is easily forgotten (Baron,

2010). Students often create their portfolio when they have graduated and it is time to look for a job. Rather than leaving it to the last minute, a portfolio should slowly evolve and get filled during studies (ibid.). Updating the portfolio when being employed is crucial, since employment in the game industry can often be project-based.

When the portfolio is finished, there is still some work left. Since the Internet is full of portfolios, artists have to market their portfolio to get some visitors. Baron (2010) reminds that in today's world with spelling correcting writing programs, there is no good excuse for spelling mistakes. Before sending the portfolio out in the world, one should always check that the portfolio is working and correct. It is a good idea to ask a friend or a colleague to review the portfolio first (ibid.). Additionally, the artist could post the portfolio and works in forums to get more exposure (Digital Tutors). This offers the chance to get important feedback.

As stated earlier, getting feedback can have a significant influence in an artist's portfolio. However, some may argue that the portfolio is over-rated in regard to an artist's working life. Occasionally, employers prefer to hire someone they know, even though there are more talented artists available (Adams, 2013). It follows, an artist should not solely depend on his or her portfolio to get employed, but should also consider other means to make their application more appealing.

### 3.4. The power of networking

Social contacts play an important role when it comes to the game industry. Networking may be broadly defined as a way of obtaining new connections in a particular industry to build and maintaining relationships to get new career opportunities or to maintain one (Forret and Dougherty, 2004). Networking activities can be, e.g., participating in social events or joining a professional association (ibid.). Do connections help an artist in finding employment?

Connections are one way of getting closer to a job opportunity or even a job offer in the game industry. Deuze et al. (2007) and Adams (2013) claim that networking is the most vital way of getting into the game industry. Deuze et al. (2007) further states that networks are also needed while working and not just before employment. Adams (2013) also acknowledges that by knowing people, you will be the first ones who hear about new job openings. Programmer Darius Kazemi has even dedicated a series of articles on his blog called *Effective Networking in the Game Industry*<sup>1</sup>. In the articles, he goes through the process of taking notes after meeting a new contact, all the way to how to speak to new people. When individuals become more known and recognizable by others in an organization, they feel more empowered and successful about their careers (Forret and Dougherty, 2004). Evidently, networking is a powerful tool in the game industry and should not to be underestimated.

For students and newcomers, starting to get new connections can be tough. Kazemi (2005) and Brathwaite and Schreibe (2012) advise to start early, before looking for a job, since it takes a long time to make strong connections. Kazemi (2005) recommends to volunteer at organizations, e.g., IGDA, that has multiple chapters in different countries. Volunteering is good for the resume, but also a perfect opportunity to network. However, Levine (2013, p. 1) from *Physics Today* also encourages to network with those outside your field: "... the more people you know, the more people you have access to". On the use of social networks, Brathwaite and Schreibe (2012) promotes that it is good to be active on Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn.

Networking might sound as something people just do at organized events, but it also takes place in the social media. Possible employers will look at an applicant's LinkedIn profile and maybe even search the person by Google (Levine, 2013). Brathwaite (2012) reveals that she has even employed people who have responded to her Twitter tweets. Social media is good marketing for the artist and also a great tool to find open positions (ibid.). Social media is great for

those who cannot participate in events or want to find other ways to get new connections. However, there should be a clear distinction between personal and professional social media. Since LinkedIn is meant for professional use, posting personal messages or funny cat images irrelevant to the profession, could give an employer an unprofessional image of the person (Levine, 2013). In such manner, the content of the information should be taken into account when posting in social media, since everything is often visible for everyone, especially on a LinkedIn account.

Combining the portfolio with networking skills is the recommended way to get into the industry, especially if you do not yet have that much experience. Moreover, social media is a great tool for artists, making it easier than ever to get new connections. It is even possible to first know about new job openings through connections.

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://tinysubversions.com/effective-networking/> [Accessed 7 Feb. 2015].

### 3.5. Does an artist need an education?

The role of education in the game industry has been constantly discussed, especially now when the industry in Finland is blooming, and new education programs are being launched. When it comes to employment, how important is an artist's education? What are the benefits and disadvantages?

Although the positions in the game industry rarely require a degree, Brathwaite and Schreibe (2012) argue both for and against getting a degree. They outline that if the artist is an extremely self-driven and motivated learner, then going to school can be a wasted effort. If one does not have these qualities, studying might be a good approach to work on the portfolio and establish new connections (ibid.). Adams (2003, p. 110), on the other hand, encourages getting a university degree: "... the better your education, the farther up the ladder you can start". Clearly, there are both advantages and disadvantages in getting a degree.

In game industry publications, there are mostly positive comments of what one can learn and gain as a student. First, university can give structure to learning, which can be hard to maintain on your own (Brathwaite and Schreibe, 2012). A finished degree also shows that one is qualified from a large group of applicants and is capable to work with long-term projects (ibid.). Second, some game studios (such as King and Ubisoft) have a student-focused recruitment, such as internships positions, and are therefore actively in contact with universities (Edge-Online, 2014). Successful internships can often lead to employment in the same company. Third, at university, it is sometimes required to study subjects not related to games or art, which can be seen as an opportunity to become more versatile and learn from other disciplines (Brathwaite and Schreibe, 2012). The benefit of an education is not the degree itself, but the experiences and opportunities you acquire during your education.

Many find disadvantages in pursuing a degree, primarily for the reason that it is not required in a job application. Brathwaite and Schreibe (2012) think it is a waste of time to obtain a degree just to have it in a resume. They believe that there are other ways to learn, and if one is gifted enough, university education is not needed. Both Brathwaite and Schreibe (2012) and Adams (2003) see the university expenses as a major drawback. This is a big difference between USA and Finnish universities, since most of the degrees in Finland are free, while they can have high tuition payments in USA. Dan Pinchbeck also sees the expenses as an issue, especially when a degree on its own is not enough when you apply for a job:

*If you're not coming out of your games course with a really, really strong portfolio and examples of finished work you've*

*wasted your three years and all of the money you've sunk into it. You will not get a job.* (Dan Pinchbeck, cited in Handrahan, 2014, p. 1)

Here, Pinchbeck is talking about game courses, but this rule can also be applied to any skill-based degrees, such as graphic design. Interest in games is usually seen as a plus, rather than a requirement. However, employers expect to see a portfolio full of projects if an artist has been studying for 3-4 years. Pinchbeck points out that students often have a problem finishing their work, resulting in an unfinished portfolio. Similarly, Tero Virtala interviewed by Taloussanommat (Ranta, 2013), asserts that finished quality projects in one's portfolio is the result of a successful education. An artist has to review both the advantages and disadvantages when considering an education and decide what suits them the best.

Taken together, these results suggest that a degree does not necessarily increase an artist's chances to get employed. While there are clear benefits of studying at a university, some can be seen as drawbacks for a successful career. An artist must seriously consider the current situation he or she is at and determine, whether or not to study. Study expenses are not an issue for Finnish students. This fact makes it easier to try out a study program and later decide if it is the right choice. In the end, it is the artist's portfolio that matters combined with other assets, as Brathwaite puts it:

*Think of the degree and the school as two variables in a larger equation that includes practical experience, your social network, your portfolio, the way you present yourself in an interview, and a bit of luck.* (Brathwaite and Schreibe, 2012, p. 18)



# Research compilation

4.

Since there are no exact regulations on how to get employed, it is recommended that qualitative techniques are applied to further explore the area. Hirsjärvi, Remes and Sajavaara (2007) say that often, the goal of a qualitative research is to reveal new ways, rather than verify existing facts. In their opinion, portrayal of the real life is the starting point of a qualitative research. This is exactly what I want to research: real experiences an artist have when 'job-hunting'. Rather than stating one way of getting employed, I want to collect various real life stories, which would show how differently people get their jobs.

It was natural for me to gather the information by interviewing the artists and send out a survey. As Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2000) advise, when studying people's behavior, the best way to analyze it is to ask them about their experiences. I know many artists in the industry and have previously discussed with them about employment. This way, I had already discovered, that many got their jobs in

very different ways. Through interviews, the subjects can freely express their opinions and thoughts (Hirsjärvi et al., 2007). I think it is important to let their voices be heard and that I should rather play the role of the messenger. Yet, as Hirsjärvi et al. (2007) and Eskola and Suoranta (2000) state, it is difficult for the researcher to stay objective, since the researcher's previous assumptions will intertwine with the gathered information. However, this can also be an advantage, since the researcher has to understand the subject and know when there is enough material for the study (Eskola and Suoranta, 2000). Since I have followed the game industry since my childhood, I am familiar with the terms, companies and culture of the industry.

## 4.1. Semi-structured interviews

I decided to use semi-structured interviews for my research. In this particular style of interviews, the researcher introduces certain themes, rather than exact questions. Semi-structured interviews also give the researcher the freedom to ask the questions in any order and add questions to get more detailed answers. The participant's thoughts and the meaning they give to experiences are the fundamentals in semi-structured interviews (Hirsjärvi and Hurme, 2000). I chose this style of interview, since I wanted the participants to feel that they were having a relaxed discussion with me. This technique also enabled me the freedom to ask more questions if needed, especially when the participants tend to talk more about different topics. For example, some might have more experience and thoughts about education than others. Semi-structured interviews also give the interviewee the opportunity to answer as freely as possible (Eskola and Suoranta, 2000). I wanted to give them this option, since one's career can be a very sensitive subject. The intention was to make them feel that their thoughts were important and if they wanted to talk about something, I did not stop them, even though it would not have been essential for this study.

As many other forms of interviews, semi-structured interviews have also some disadvantages. First of all, it takes a lot of time and effort to conduct interviews. Many things can affect the interview situation, such as the body language of the researcher (Hirsjärvi and Hurme, 2000). The participant might play a different role and the final evaluation of the material might differ depending on who is analyzing it (*ibid.*). Since the rules of conducting semi-structured interviews are not strict, it makes it harder to know if it is done right. This was going through my mind when planning and having the interviews. However, as mentioned earlier, semi-structured interviews have advantages that for this study outweigh its disadvantages.

I asked the participants 11 questions that were divided into four themes. Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2000) advise to start with a general and easy question that the participant feels it is possible to answer, and later go to more specific questions. The first theme was about their personal history, since it is common that an interest in, e.g., drawing or games will affect their future career choice. The next question was to "describe the reason why you want to work in games". This could have occurred already when they were young or be discovered later, even when they already have entered the game industry. The second theme was the personal work history. I went to more specific questions and asked them to describe how they got their current position, or previous position, if they were unemployed during the interview. I additionally asked, if they have made any changes in their

way of applying for jobs. The most reflective questions were "tell a story about a challenging moment, and a key moment in your career". This task gave vibrant answers. The third theme was about artists in the Finnish game industry. I was curious about their own observations, so I asked "how do you think artists get their jobs in the game industry?" I also ask about the role of an artist's portfolio, education and connections which were the last theme: an artist's methods of applying for a job. I ended the interview with a pleasant question: "give 3 tips to those who want to work in the industry". This way, the artist could summarize the topics we had discussed and feel closure.



## 4.2. Survey

According to Eskola and Suoranta (2000), having two or more research methods, strengthens the reliability of the research. Thus, in addition to interviewing, I constructed a brief structured survey. The advantage of a survey is its fast ability to collect information from a large group. When the survey is sent to a specific group (in this case game industry artists) the response rate is usually higher. Disadvantages with surveys are that respondents might not take it seriously or they might not understand the questions. Thus, the questions should be short and clear, and the survey as a whole should not take more than 15 minutes to fill (Hirsjärvi et al. 2007). By making a survey, I could get a quick overview of the situations of artists in the Finnish game industry. The game artists could state their opinion anonymously. Since the industry is still quite small in Finland, I wanted to hear as many opinions as possible.

In contrast to the interviews, I made the survey short and clear, which follow the general guidelines of making a survey. According to Borg's publication on Kvantimotiv's webpage, a questionnaire should be well planned so that the questions are simple, but useful for the research. Bad planning of the survey can even repel participants. As in interviews, the survey should start with general questions that are easy to answer, and later ask personal questions (Hirsjärvi and Hurme, 2000; Borg). The survey's clarity is crucial, since the researcher cannot see the participants' expressions or body language. Suggestive questions should be avoided and participants should be given the option not to answer a question (Hirsjärvi and Hurme, 2000).

The survey is structured, with just a couple of open questions for comments. Structured questions are easy and fast to resolve, both for the researcher and the participants (Hirsjärvi and Hurme, 2000). The open questions in the interviews and the structured questions in the survey complement each other, bringing robustness into my findings. Similar patterns or opinions could be discovered by contrasting and comparing the interviews' results with the questionnaire's results.

I had the same themes included in the questionnaire as in the semi-structured interviews. There were nine questions for the participants to answer. First I asked about the participants' demographic data such as age, gender, nationality, highest earned degree and occupation. Then, I asked employment related questions; how they got their current job, amount of experience they have and to rate the usefulness of different factors when applying for a job. In the end of the questionnaire, the questions were if they have ever been unemployed and if yes, the time of unemployment. I also asked participants to rate if any factors have made it harder when they have had problems applying for a job. Lastly, the participant could write a comment or anything that they had on their mind.

## 4.3. Realization and analysis of the participants for the interviews and survey

Following recommendations by the literature, to focus on a homogeneous subset of informants, I chose to interview artists that are currently working in the game industry. I also included one who is currently unemployed. By artists I mean digital artists such as concept artists, character designers, animators and similar titles that artists have in the game industry. The bigger the company, the more specific titles exist. Though, it is good to remember that the Finnish game industry is still quite young with many small companies, where artists often have many tasks and roles, rather than just one.

There are a couple of reasons for why I chose to concentrate on artists, rather than all the employers on the game industry. First, having been an animation artist myself, I have a deeper understanding of the issues they face and can ask better questions pertaining to their situation. Second, based on the discussions I have read in social media and participated in, being an artist is challenging, especially when you are applying for your first positions, and many have experienced unemployment. This makes the area a fertile interview ground. Third, there's a lot of different kind of people working in the game industry: artists, programmers, producers, just to mention a few. Concentrating one type of occupation will help me discover patterns that cut across this group and thereby will help me to get the most out of this research. In addition, there has not been such a study of game industry artists before which will allow for new insights to emerge.

I benefited from easy access to information having worked in the area myself. I had heard various employment stories that I wanted to study this more deeply and broadly. I had met the interview participants through different occasions; school, work and events. The exact amount of interview participants was not locked from the beginning, but I planned to have at least five since this was suggested to me when I presented my idea for this study. I decided, depending on how the interviews go, I would see if I needed to add more participants. Eventually, I interviewed seven participants. I wanted to have informants from different companies and with various backgrounds regarding education and nationality. Two of the participants were a bit older than the others and they had also been in the industry for a longer time. Most of the artists were at one of their first full-time jobs, which was my main audience.

I contacted the participants through Facebook, as I was planning keeping the interviews conversational. I could have also sent an email, which would have maybe been more professional, but the game industry culture is really

relaxed and I saw that there was no harm in contacting them through Facebook. All of the participants that I contacted, were willing to participate in the interview. I presented my thesis idea and described the interview situation as a relaxed discussion. I gave them examples of places where we could have the interview, such as the company's office or a café. They then chose the one that suited them most. I wanted to give them the freedom to choose a place where they would feel relaxed. The only requirement was that the place could not be too noisy, since I was going to record the interviews. Three of the interviews were held in a café, two at participants' homes, one in the company's office, and one at a bar. I recorded the interviews on my phone, which was well-suited for the situation at hand. A phone on the table did not seem to distract them that much. We often talked a bit before the interview which worked well as a warm-up for both of us. The discussion often continued after the interview; many were curious what kind of answer the other gave and was there something useful and unusual in their answers. During the discussions that took place after the interview, some participants remembered something they wanted to add, and asked if I could turn the recorder on again. It seemed that they took the interviews seriously and wanted to share their thoughts.

I had planned that one interview would take about 30 minutes. The interviews held at the cafés, office and bar took 35-50 minutes. The ones that were held at participants' homes, took from 45 minutes to over 1 hour. The places could have affected how relaxed the participants felt, maybe that is the reason why interviews at homes took longer than interviews at public places and offices. Evidently, my presence could also have an affect. Most of the participants knew me from before, so none of them had a hard time answering the questions and discussing about the industry. Some of the participants answered two questions at the same time. I also reminded them that there is no right or wrong answer.

I wrote the transcript of the interview during the same week as the interview, rather than leaving it all after the interviews. According to Hirsjärvi et al. (2007) there is various ways to write a transcription, as long as it is accurate. I transcribed the interviews word for word, leaving out repeated words and when the participant rephrased themselves. I used the transcriptions for the analysis.

The survey was made with SurveyMonkey that I also used in my Bachelor's Thesis. I conducted the survey during the time period of approximately one month, 15th of August to 13th of September 2014. The survey was promoted on various Facebook pages such as IGDA Finland, Play Finland and

Finnish Female Game Artists. In addition to that, I sent the link to vast amount of game companies, such as Rovio and Supercell. I also asked participants to forward the survey to their colleagues and friends in game companies, to get a bigger reach. By the end of the survey period, data had been collected from 90 individuals. I posted reminders two times in the Facebook groups, which resulted in some more participants.

There are multiple ways of analyzing qualitative material, but since semi-structured interviews are usually already divided in themes, it is logical to analyze the material through the themes (Eskola and Suoranta, 2000). I read through my transcriptions several times before I started to organize it according to the themes and similarities. I also took excerpts from the interviews and survey's comments, to show exactly what the informants said. Through theming, different answers from the material, concerning the same theme can be discovered (Eskola and Suoranta, 2000). This way, different views will be visible, which is exactly what I want to bring out in my research. I think it is important to quote their exact words, not just describe my analysis of the interviews and survey. The citations also give the reader the possibility to evaluate if the researchers has made any good analysis of the subject. Since the survey was from the beginning structured, I analyzed the answers in that same order.



#### 4.4. Reliability and validity of the study

According to Hirsjärvi et al. (2007), the reliability and validity of a research should always be estimated. A study is reliable, when another researcher would get the same results by repeating the study. Validity is measured by the methods used in the study, which in this case is semi-structures interviews and a survey.

Eskola and Suoranta (2000) and Hirsjärvi et al. (2007) mention that the reliability will increase if the researcher explains how the research was done, being completely transparent about it, also when it comes to possible errors. This is why I have explained in detail who I decided to interview, when the survey was sent out and the other steps of this research. The direct citations from the interviews and survey answers also increases the reliability, giving the reader the exact words of the participants. The validity of a research can usually be strengthened by combining many research methods. This is called triangulation (Eskola and Suoranta, 2000). For this reason, I decided to use both interviews and a survey and find out if the results are similar.

One factor that could decrease the reliability and validity could be the fact that I knew some of the interviewees from before. Two are my former colleagues from university, two are former coworkers and the rest were new to me. I met two of the new ones at IGDA gatherings and a friend recommended his co-worker. I could have announced, e.g., in IGDA or Facebook group that I needed volunteers for interviewing and this way gotten a different group of participants. Still, I do not think my familiarity with some of the participants would have affected the results much. After all, every individual is unique and have their own personal story.

In contrast to the interviews, the survey allows the participant to be completely anonymous, also to the researcher. This complements the interviews and increases the reliability of the study.

The fact that I am an artist, myself might have affected the questions in the interviews and survey. Another researcher, with a different background, could have asked alternative questions. As mentioned earlier, I see this as a positive quality, since I already have an understanding of the industry and the artist positions, which enabled me to go into details. However, the more personal the topic is, the easier it is to make the mistake to interpreting the data through one's own mind. I actively refrained to interweave my own thoughts into the data. Instead, I used my knowledge to link the artists thoughts to the game industry culture from the literature and find suggestions for future research.



# How visual artists find employment in the Finnish game industry

5.

In this chapter, the results of the interviews and survey are presented. The results are divided into the themes based on the research questions of this study. In the first section of the interviews, the artists and their backgrounds are presented, following the themes. The survey is the second part of the results, where the typical profile of a game artist is first presented, following the results of the survey questions together with visual diagrams.

## Interviews: the research group and their backgrounds

There were seven participants in the research group for the interviews, one of which was unemployed at the time of the interview. The other participants were working at Finnish game companies at the time of the interview. In the beginning of the research, I intended to interview 5-10 persons, but after the seventh interview, I felt that I had a

suitable amount of material for analyzing the interviews.

As seen in Table 4, the sample itself consists of four male and three female participants. I consciously chose to interview about the same amount of female and male participants. To ensure the level of validity, I wanted to have both genders to get a broader view of the industry. As noted in chapter 3.1, the game industry is quite male dominated. Participants' ages varied from 24 to 40. Rather than concentrating on a certain age, I wanted the participants to be in different stages of their careers. Some of the participants had just gotten their first full-time job, and others had been in the industry for some years already. I was sure that some of the answers could vary depending on the age of the participant, since the Finnish game industry has recently developed rather rapidly. If I would choose a certain age group, I would get too many similar answers, since the industry is still so young with not many different career paths to take.

One thing that limited my range of participants was the

chosen location. All of the interviews were held in Helsinki, meaning that the informants were currently working or unemployed in that particular city. In addition, I wanted to hear the opinions of foreigners, since 25% of the employers in the Finnish game industry are foreigners (HS, 2014). The majority (5) of the participants were Finnish and the minority (2) from Spain and Russia. Generally, I chose not to have too similar participants, such as working in the same company with the same positions, but rather people with different backgrounds, ages, education and companies. All names of people and companies are pseudonyms so that informants' privacy is maintained.

In the first part of the interviews I asked the artists to describe their backgrounds and when it occurred to them that they wanted to work in the game industry. Knowing many artists and being one myself, I have noticed a clear connection between hobbies and artistic abilities during the childhood and the career choice. Most of us gravitate naturally toward the areas in which we excel. Five of the interviewees mentioned that they used to draw a lot as a child. Two informants also mentioned that getting compliments from others strengthened their choice to continue an artistic career path. Many were also interested in games that functioned as inspiration for doing art.

*I started to draw in a really early age. As a kid I discovered that I kind of did it better than my friends of the same age, that kind of thing, I guess, got me some compliments from the adults. This is what I got hooked too since very childhood. (Michail)*

*Since I was little I liked to draw a lot and my parent praised me, which made me even more excited about drawing. The more I drew, the more I practiced. I felt that "great this is something I'm good at". So that also encouraged me to maintain and develop my drawing skills further. (Heli)*

*I was first interested in computer graphics. Everything started from that actually. . . . I did some small graphics, music and of course I played also. Art classes were the most interested in high school, I guess I was okay in that. Doing clay work was something that I liked most. I got interested in 3D when I saw the movie The Lawnmower Man. It had some 3D fantasy parts. Maybe Toy Story was available at that time too. After I saw it I knew I wanted to do 3D art. (Tuomas)*

*Before that [going to University of Applied Sciences] I was doing 3D on my own since I was a teenager. I have always loved to draw. . . . I got my first 3D Max program that my sister brought for me from Russia just when I turned 13 and from there on it went forward. (Joonas)*

Table 4. Demographic of the interviewees

NAME (GENDER)	AGE	NATIONALITY	DEGREE	YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN THE GAME INDUSTRY	DURATION OF INTERVIEW
Nea (f)	24	Finnish	Bachelor of Arts	2	35 min
Joonas (m)	26	Finnish	Bachelor of Arts	1	38 min
Heli (f)	26	Finnish	Bachelor of Arts	4	47 min
Aksel (m)	29	Finnish	Vocational School (printing)	1 (10 graphic design*)	1 h
Adriana (f)	29	Spanish	Master in 2D animatin (1 year)	3	41 min
Tuomas (m)	36	Finnish	Bachelor of Science	7	1 h 13 min
Michail (m)	40	Finnish/Russian	Bachelor in Pedagogy	7	46 min

\* Before working in the game industry, Aksel had worked as a graphic designer for 10 years.

During their childhood, almost none of the interviewees thought about a career in the game industry. They were simply interested in drawing and tried to figure out how to make this to a profession. As a matter of fact, only one of the participants, Heli, had a career in the game industry in mind when applying for a University of Applied Sciences. During the older participants youth, the game industry was not a clear option for a career in the same way as in today's world.

*I tried to find schools where I could study 3D or computer graphics, but I didn't find any, maybe one. I tried to apply for TaiK, where I didn't get in. I ended up studying telecommunication engineering, so my career kind of went on pause. (Tuomas)*

*I didn't know if I wanted to go and work for television, movies or games. It became more clear in University of Applied Sciences. I didn't wanted to do commercials and animation isn't my thing, so that way I went to the game industry. (Joonas)*

*Some acquaintance casually shared a link to me about Metropolia's 3D line. "What about this?" At first I was like 3D-what? But then I started to read and saw that it's possible to specialize in video games industry, so then it started to interest me. (Heli)*

During the interviews, I identified a division between the artists. Some specifically wanted to work as an artist in the game industry, while others hoped to work as an artist in related industries. Of course, this is something that does not need to be defined when working in the industry, and is something that can change during an artist's career. Many of the participants did animations and other forms of art before going to work with game visuals. A few of the participants mentioned interactivity as a reason for choosing an artistic career specifically for games. Nea also mentioned that she felt socially more close to the game industry scene rather than the traditional art industry.

*All that time I had the game industry in my mind. Closest to my heart was game industry. Most of all I was interested to work with role games, with Blizzard and other big studios as my dream companies. (Heli)*

*Games have more interactivity, whereas in animation the script is already written. (Aksel)*

*I like to draw things that become alive when they move and have some kind of a function that can evokes feelings in the player. (Nea)*

*I had been working already as a character designer and background artist and clean up person and an illustrator freelance for already like three years or four, before that. Is actually the first time I actually work for video games. (Adriana)*

*But the magical thing about the making graphics for the games is the interactivity, well that's what it is for me, so that's what I'm inspired with and in love with. . . . It's like bringing life to something that isn't alive. (Michail)*

Three of the youngest participants' (Joonas, Heli and Nea) personal paths to the industry are quite similar. All of them went to study 3D art or animation at an Applied Sciences school, during which they realized that they would like to work in the game industry. The rest of the interviewees (4), who were in a higher age bracket, worked in other positions and even different industries, before entering as artists in the game industry. Adriana even mentioned that she joined the game industry by coincidence.

In summary, the participants' backgrounds are quite different. One aspect that unifies the participants is their artistic childhood experiences and a notable interest in computers and digital video games. One could almost say that their career paths started already during their childhood and gave a direction to their adulthood vocation. Age made a clear division between the participants. Since being an artist in the game industry has only emerged as profession during the last ten years, it has not been established as an eminent career path. For younger generation this has been a clear option from other career choices and something that one could study in today's world. Contrary to the notable correlations observed between answers and age, there were no big differences in given answers between male and female participants. Only one knew from an early stage that she wanted to be employed in the game industry, whereas the others came to the conclusion later, either during their studies or while working in related industries. Apparently, becoming an artist in the game industry is possible, even after multiple other interests and jobs, as long as an internal artistic interest exists.

#### **5.1.1. ARTISTS' EXPERIENCES OF GETTING TO THE GAME INDUSTRY**

There has been a lot of literature written specifically about how to get employed in the game industry, but not concerning artists' viewpoints regarding the issue. This was also one of the key interview questions for the participants. Not only is it interesting, but also one of the key points of one's career — how to get the first job? To know more in detail about

how the artists got to their current positions, I asked: what did they do when they applied for job? How were people involved in the process and did they identify some decisive factors in the process? I also asked how they got to their current position, since many have been working in other fields before joining the game industry.

For many of the participants, the first step to the game industry was through an internship. A considerable part (4) told that they started at a company as an intern and of these four, three of them continued there as full-time employees, after the internship had ended. Joonas was one of them, but he first applied to Barona's GamePro program that aims to train people and help them to obtain an internship at a Finnish game company. The others simply applied directly to companies for an internship. Heli mentioned how her friend had first applied for a position and then had suggested that she should also apply.

An interesting observation is that the youngest participants, Heli, Nea and Joonas, all got their first position in a game company through an internship. Only one of the older participants, Aksel, mentioned an internship as his first job in the industry, but it was a company concentrating on graphical content rather than games. All of the older participants got into the game industry after doing related work. In all cases, they did not apply to the company the traditional way. Michail was discovered by his portfolio and invited to Finland, Aksel applied for a position his colleague was offered and Adriana through Facebook. In the interviews, I noticed that applying for a job was not a linear process for all of the participants. Usually there were other people involved, such as friends from school or coworkers.

*Everything was accidental. . . . Freelancing there is pretty hard, so I decided to use Facebook as an open door to the world. So, I actually got this job because of Facebook. . . Internet is a very big place where people can get your stuff, but its also very a big place where people can see your stuff and feel interested in what you do. It permits you to work as a freelancer or even people will ask you to go and work with them, that happened to me . . . I saw his work on Facebook, added him as a friend, because I started adding artist to keep up with their work, as it's important that I show my work, it's really important that you see other people's work too. And the contact net gets bigger, and in an accidental way well we started talking and two years after that he asked me if I wanted to join Company Y. (Adriana)*

*Big part of my portfolio in that time was made of pixel art. I was invited from Moscow at that time to work for Company X. They found me somehow, I don't know. I had online portfolio actually since 2001. It was kind of a big*

*deal at that time. That company, Company X, was growing like very rapidly exactly that time, it was 2007. I think the Helsinki office alone had 160 people when I joined them. (Michail)*

*My friends was asked there to work, he had somehow been in contact with them regarding some position. Then I just jokily said, "send them my showreel, let's see what happens." I had just got my showreel done. He sent them the link. After five minutes I got a phone call, where they asked me for a job interview. One of the founders had sat next to the one getting the link [to his showreel]. (Aksel)*

For some, getting the first job was a real challenge. Being unemployed is not rare while searching for a job, and sometimes it takes a long time even before you get an invitation for an interview. Over half of the participants had been unemployed at some point, but this includes also their careers before entering the game industry. Unemployment can be an exhausting process for many artists. Some participants recommended to apply many times, even to the same company, even though they would not have positions open. Michail had also heard this suggestion, but thought it was weird. Being unemployed while searching for work was one of the most challenging moments of his life. He had not gotten a job, even though he had a lot of experience. It was hard for the participants to figure out the reason for their unemployment. Some speculated that they did not have enough experience, an issue that many young artists struggle with. A second reason was bad timing; maybe companies were not looking for artists at that moment or there were better candidates.

*I tried to send applications, but my portfolio wasn't that strong or then the timing was just bad. So I didn't get a job from anywhere. I didn't even get to interviews! In the end, I didn't apply for that many places, now when I think about it. I was quite picky, I didn't apply for places that didn't interested me at all. I didn't apply to small studios, just big ones I knew about. I didn't know about the small studios. First after my internship I got a job. It wasn't an easy process. (Joonas)*

*The hardest thing when I was unemployed and I had to wake up in the morning and didn't know what to do. (Adriana)*

*I applied two times. For the first time I applied I had been doing 3D at home for 8 months. So, I applied and go to the interview. They liked my enthusiasm, but still wanted me to have more experience. At that time I did everything, 3D modeling, rendering, lightning, animation. I didn't know*



*what I wanted to do. I did some modeling and texturing examples to them that I got good feedback from. From that I got inspired and decided to concentrate more on 3D modeling. After that I trained at home for about 3-4 months, just by doing, that's the best way to learn. You learn by doing. I applied for a second time and again they still weren't whether they should hire me. I sent some new works for them, cards that were meant to be in in a game with small polygon. I sent them and they asked me to come there. At the same day, we signed the contract. (Tuomas)*

*... so they took me for an interview and after some time they called me back and told me that "hey we kind of changed our mind, we took an intern to that positions." That was the answer. (Michail)*

This made me think if the informants had changed the way that they applied for a job. Michail did not know how to change the way of applying, since he had tried everything: filling in a formal application and take contact on personal level. For the other participants, some had noticed a change in their way of applying for jobs. Since they had gotten more experience, they knew more about the industry and how the companies see possible candidates. A couple of participants mentioned that they had only applied to large studios at first, and had later realized that big does not always mean better. Nea mentioned that she had learned how to compile her portfolio in a more professional way and what a job hunting artist really should put in it.

*There's shouldn't be anything half-assed stuff. They see even 100 of portfolios and they want to see them quick, who has a good chance. (Nea)*

*Maybe methods haven't changed, but when I applied for the first time I wanted to get to big companies. ... Nowadays, I'm not as interested in big studios as I used to be. I have my feet on the ground now, I want to be in a company where it's nice to be at. If you have found a nice team, then you usually like to stay in it. (Heli)*

*..., some of my friends they told me, that it's okay to apply again and again, even if they have rejected you before. But I personally don't see the point. ... I feel like, if I was rejected once, why would they need me again? I don't really know, maybe I'm wrong. (Michail)*

*Since the portfolio is so important in searching for jobs, if I would now be without a job I would concentrate on building my portfolio, doing own projects. My situation was that I just graduated, I didn't have money, it was paralyzing, I got*

*the feeling that I quickly have to get a job from somewhere! It was hard at that moment to put together a portfolio. It wasn't fun. (Joonas)*

I also asked their opinion on how they think other artists get their jobs in the Finnish game industry in general. Everyone agreed that you have to have a good portfolio that shows that you are capable of doing the job. The second thing that had impact, were the people you know and your personality. According to the informants, it was a combination of both. Michail pointed out that Finns have it easier to get employed in Finland, since many of the Finns in the game industry in Finland know each other. Almost all of the participants mentioned that you have to be a good fit for the company. An artist with a cartoony style is a better fit to companies such as Rovio rather than game studios that do realistic racing games, e.g., Bugbear. This is why it is important for an artist to know what to focus on. Company size also matters. Bigger companies hire people for more specific positions, whereas smaller companies prefer artists with a variety of skills.

*Some people don't even have a proper portfolio, but they still manage to get a job. And that was quite a mystery for me, but then I found out that okay they were just friends. Being Finnish would help a lot, I think. Simply judging from the statistics, Finns have less problem getting employed or maybe it's the matter of those contacts, maybe all Finns are more likely to make better contacts, like better contacts with one and other than with somebody coming from some other country. (Michail)*

*It depends on what the employer wants: one who can do a bit of everything or one who is specialized. Bigger companies probably can take people who are more specialized. The smaller the company, the bigger the scale can your portfolio be. It depends on where you apply. (Joonas)*

In summary, many employees in the Finnish game industry start as interns. This is noticeable with the younger participants. A background in art or graphic design in a related industry is also a good starting point when entering the game industry, which was observed with the older informants. Unfortunately, the majority of the participants had gone through unemployment. Many did not know what they would do, if they could not find a job from Finland, since they can only see themselves working in the game industry. This is why, it is crucial to think about changing strategy when applying for a job, and not only apply to large and notable game companies. A good portfolio is essential for an artist, but contacts hold importance. Also having the right personality for the right company was seen to be of

importance. In addition, an artist's style and skill range can further determine if working for a big or small studio is a better choice. In the end, it is about finding a place where one fits best.

### 5.1.2. IMPORTANCE OF THE PORTFOLIO

I asked the artist about the meaning of a portfolio when applying for a job. All of the participants agreed, that a portfolio is important for an artist. Michail, who was currently unemployed, said that even though he has a good portfolio, it is not getting him anywhere, so it was hard to him to see the meaning of it. Joonas advised that students should start to build their portfolio in an early stage, before graduating. One main topic that also came up was the focus of the portfolio. An artist should think about the goal of the portfolio, otherwise it might be a collection of pieces that do not fit the position or even the company. The artist should make it really clear if he or she wants to work with and what are the strengths. This makes it much easier for the employer to see how the artist relates to the rest of the team and the need. As discussed with Joonas, this is hard, but when the focus is clear, one can put more effort in that area and break through. Aksel noted that in case of animations and group projects, it is important to write a breakdown, meaning what part the artist did in the project.

*Put your best work there and try to think that if you apply for a 3D job, don't fill it with 2D works. They want to see what's relevant for them. In games they use single assets so put that there. Artsy stuff isn't always reversible to a game. (Nea)*

*I would say that it really depends on how you are as a person. If you decide to master one skill it can make you an amazing professional that everyone wants to work with. If you are interested in many things you can learn a little bit of everything. There's not a lot jobs for animators in Finland, especially in game industry. If you want to be an animator, you have to be a really good animator, since there's not that many positions for animators. (Tuomas)*

*Don't fill your portfolio with loads of images, you don't need 50, only the best ones. (Nea)*

*One flaw in my portfolio is that it doesn't have a focus. There's concept art, 3D models and so on. It depends on what the employer wants, one who can do a bit of everything or one who is specialized. Bigger companies probably can take people who are more specialized.*

*The smaller the company, the bigger the scale can your portfolio be. It depends on where you apply. It is said that you should send a different portfolio to different companies, which kind of makes sense, these kind of tailor made portfolios. (Joonas)*

Three of the participants mentioned test assignments that the employer might ask for when applying for a position. The purpose of this is to see how the artist's style suits the company or project that they need to hire an artist for. While it is understandable that the companies want to test the skills of the artist, many saw this as a very challenging and stressful situation, especially if the artist is working at another company at the same time.

*The procedure is so that the companies, when they are looking for an artist, first of all, yeah they might see your portfolio, but then the essential part is giving you the test assignment. That test assignment is usually some substantial work, probably two days long work. And you really try hard, usually you go the extra mile, because you are in the position to try hard to impress them, so you will do anything to try to impress them. Usually you end up crunching for those test assignments. All of that is just to get to the 'maybe' point. (Michail)*

*I was drawing night and day for a week. After work, I was working on the assignment. . . . That intensive period that was physically very exhausting for my hand that in the end it just stopped working. The muscle got overloaded, which made me go to a physiotherapist and I had to take sick leave because of this. I couldn't use my hand properly. It still affects me. I can't draw as much as I want anymore. I have to save it to work. It was a very educational experience for me, even though you want something very much, it's best to think about the consequences it can bring to the future. It's not something you think about. When you are so excited and think that you have to work for this thing. You shouldn't let your excitement take over you, especially if your health is on the line. It still affects me, this hand get strained really quickly. (Heli)*

Not only did the artists mention the importance of the portfolio, the majority pointed out how the visibility of the portfolio matters. Having your work online is crucial and using social medias such as Facebook is a great way to get the works published and easily shareable to a large audience. Joonas advises to build a portfolio that one is proud of, so that it feels great to get out there and share the works with others. Half of the participants mentioned



getting feedback online as a great resource for developing as an artist. Other participants mentioned the importance of feedback in other situations, as in education, which will be looked at in the next chapter. Overall, getting feedback is essential in an artist's life. This requires the artists to share the art he or she makes, which the participants highly advises everyone to do. Not only can the feedback help an artist develop its skills, it can also help to see what one is good at and what to focus on. It is highly important to know the opinions of others before applying for a job.

*If you don't wanna be on Facebook, because you don't want you face to be on Facebook, that's fine. But you are making art. So, you should at least have a place where you can show what you can do, with your name, you don't need to put your phone number, address. It's kind of anonymous, but you're making stuff to be shared in a way. (Adriana)*

*You have to be able to receive constructive critic. You should never let yourself to the point that you're arrogant or think that "they don't know anything." In arts, you can never be good enough, except what your work requires you to do. You can always be better. There's always something you can develop further. That's why it's good to join places like forums like Polycount, where you'll meet amazing artists. You can help those who are under your level and you'll get feedback from those much more above you. You will figure out your own level of skills. You will be able to figure out your true skills. (Heli)*

*When you think you have the best you can do, then go and show it to others and be happy to receive feedback. For example at GamePro, I asked my lecturers for feedback. And do show your work to non-art people too. If you're for example a 3D artist, your work will be visible to the end user. Their opinion is very vital in the end. "Do you think this is cool?" As an artist, you might be like "Yeah, but these complimentary colors..." and all this kind of what isn't seen in the eyes of the end user. (Joonas)*

As expected, all the participants saw the value in an artist portfolio. From an artist's portfolio, it should be clear what their focus is. It should not be full packed with too different art and not too much material. In addition to providing the employer a portfolio, they might require some test assignments. As discussed, these can be very stressful for the artists, especially for already employed ones who are looking for new jobs. Lastly, the portfolio should be shareable and as visible as possible. Sharing art in social media or forums makes it possible to get valuable feedback from others and at the same time get to know the peers in the industry.

### 5.1.3. ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF CONNECTIONS

Since it has been noted that connections can have a great impact on one's career, I asked the participants to describe the role of connections and networking for an artist in the game industry. Half of the participants mentioned that a portfolio is not enough, but the personality of the applicant is almost equally important. If the portfolio will get an artist to an interview, the personality might be the next feature that will be reviewed by the employer. Employers want to hire people who are a part of creating a nice working environment. The personality can also be a trigger to show the portfolio, e.g., when being at social events. The participants wanted to note that already hired artists often get asked if they know some good artists for an open position. Some artists saw that it is easier for the employer to hire a person that a current employee knows, since the chances that the artists will fit in with the team are higher. Also, the connections might have worked or studied with the artist before, so the employer can quickly know the skill set of the artist.

*Portfolio is the tool which they estimate do they want to know more about you. It's quite important. When you're looking for a job, I would say your personality has about as much value as your portfolio. When they know that you can do something, they want to know if you're suitable for the team. (Nea)*

*It's 50-50, with your portfolio and your personality. The better your portfolio is the less it matters what kind of person you are and the other way around. You have two assets to present to the employers: how you work in a team and what kind of work you have. (Tuomas)*

*Before we start putting a job on the Internet, like an open apply job, supervisors talk to the artists inside house and they say "Do you know anyone that can be in this place?" Why? Because we know each other. (Adriana)*

*Firstly comes your portfolio, secondly your contacts. They're the two most important factors. If you need someone, at first you ask the others if they know someone. If you have good artists working for you, they hardly would suggest a bad artist for you. That way contacts affect a lot. (Heli)*

Since Finland is a small country and the Finnish game industry even smaller, the chances are that people know each other quite well. This was a shock for Michail who is from Russia. He was surprised that the word goes around very quickly. He did not see this necessary as a positive thing, since you have to be very careful. He pointed out that the

reason that he has not been employed might be that he got a bad reputation in his previous company. The Finns on the other hand saw this as a great opportunity to get into the game industry in Finland.

*So, I managed somehow gain negative reputation. The locals didn't really like me, I wasn't really compatible with the traditional Finnish behavior. I wasn't diplomatic. I was kind of saying things straight. (Michail)*

*When you once get into the game industry, you start to get to know the people. And especially in Finland where the gaming industry is so small. People circle from one company to another. You could say in Finland it's like a village tavern, in that sense that everyone know everyone, one way or another. The word goes around really easily. Word of mouth works really well. So, if you get into one place and do your job well, the word will go around when you need a job in the future. Of course people have to like your personality, if you're not likable no one will recommend you. (Heli)*

*Even if you would be the best of the best, if you have a bad reputation, you will have a hard time getting a job. Who do you trust more; someone you know or a stranger? It's easier to employ a friend. At that point you don't even have to be the best. If you're good and you're really nice, people want to hire you. Contacts, really good to have. (Tuomas)*

Social media had a big role for some of the participants, mainly the three younger ones, but also one of the more experienced ones. They mentioned that recruiting is often happening in the social media, before it appears on the official sites of the game companies. Sometimes the positions only appear in social media groups. A couple of the participants mentioned a Finnish Facebook group called Finconauts - Finnish Digital Art Community<sup>1</sup>, where artist post their art.

*Often, the open positions are known inside the group, before they appear on a webpage open to public. So connections are important in that way. One company even asked on Facebook for people to recommend employers to their new team, which was never on their homepage. Some open positions are only known for the 'insiders'. (Joonas)*

*LinkedIn is in that sense really handy that you can add there public recommendations. There are some groups, like IGDA, where people have put job-ads, but I don't think it's a must [to be in Facebook]. (Nea)*

*Having conversations with all of those people is great and my last works in comics, illustration have all been commissioned through Facebook. Because it has my email, I have a public page people can like. They can send you a email or a private message through Facebook, it's very easy so you can have your personal Facebook and then an open Facebook, LinkedIn, Tumblr, Twitter all of those, you never know where it's coming to come from. They have such a mass sharing buttons and it just spreads. (Adriana)*

Joonas, Nea and Heli mentioned the monthly IGDA gatherings that are held in Helsinki, usually at a bar. According to them, this is the perfect way to personally meet game developers and even company CEO's. The relaxed and informal atmosphere might also make it easier for the artists to take contact and get new connections. Nea mentioned game jams, which are short events where you gather together artists, developers and people interested in making games, form groups and make a game together. For her, this is a great way to get connections and at the same time get experienced in making games and get portfolio material.

*But it's good to know people, go to the IGDA gatherings, make yourself noticeable, this is what I do. It's really painful and embarrassing at first, but it's less embarrassing now that I'm employed, instead of saying "Hi, I'm human, here's my card". At the first IGDA I was I took a tequila and a mojito and I start to talk to the first person I see "Hi! You have a Company Z hoodie on! You must be in Company Z!" I'm still in contact with this person. It's always a bit embarrassing. (Joonas)*

*Contacts are principally good that you know where employees are needed. And of course, if you know people from some workplace you can present your charming personality that they know if they want a person like you there. Before you even apply for a job, contacts are already in that stage or during the application process, in that stage they are pretty good. I have mainly through IGDA [gatherings] gotten contacts. I have seen Company Y-people at IGDA long before I applied there, so I basically told them that "hey I'm going to apply for you" and they were like "Ok!". (Nea)*

*Showing your art is a great way of opening a discussion. Especially Finnish people can be quite shy to suddenly start to talk about something, so we maybe need some kind of an impulse like a common subject to talk about. For example, a drawing on an iPad is easy to talk about. "What tools do you use? From where did you get this idea?" It can trigger many questions and that way start a discussion and in the end get a new connection. (Heli)*

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/groups/finconauts/>

To summarize, all participants see benefits in having contacts. It is beneficial both for the employer and the expected employee, since it brings them closer. Recommendations can make an applicant stand out and be presented as a good and skillful worker. In a small country like Finland, connections can be the key for a career in the game industry. On the downside, having a bad reputation is especially problematic in such a small community. Being active on social media is one way of getting more connections, but there are also events such as the IGDA gathering where artists can meet game company employers directly. All and all, having connections is crucial for an artist.

#### 5.1.4. EDUCATION: NOT FOR EVERYONE

I was interested in hearing the participants' opinions about education. Are there benefits in having an education and in which way? Does having an education affect an artist and does it divide them somehow?

The participants had various opinions about education. The main point that was communicated was that an artist does not have to have a degree to get a job, since it is the skills that matters in the end. A degree on a CV will not get an artist anywhere, if the portfolio is weak. Training yourself is more valuable than having an education. A couple of the participants, Michail and Aksel, expressed that an artist is not motivated enough if he or she has to go to school. Both of them were the older participants who had gone through a lot of self training. It was also expressed that education in Finland is not yet developed enough for the game industry and that it is behind of what is happening in the industry. Aksel pointed out that by this he meant that an artist should not just rely on school, but rather be active on its own and train on their free time.

*It should be project based, planning projects and doing things. School offers the resources, licensed programs and such. It should be more focused on that, that they give the tools. You're the paint and school is the brush. It's a transmission tool to get you contact to the painting. (Aksel)*

*Education doesn't have that much value. When you're applying for your first job, then they might be interested if you have any higher education, after high school. Nobody is interested in your grades. After you have had your first job, they are interested what people thought about you there. (Nea)*

*It only takes for them to do is just signing up to some education and then they end up being maybe half-*

*professional, probably unexperienced because they didn't work before, all they have is the aspiration. That might be a trap for them, because they think they've invested enough of their time and effort and they're entitled to get a job or something, but probably not so many companies will prefer them. Only maybe as free internships or something that they don't have to pay for. (Michail)*

*If you go to school thinking that they're just going to put a chip inside your brain and you're going to learn with any kind of effort, it's not going to happen. (Adriana)*

The younger participants had a more positive outlook on education. They also had the opinion that on paper the degree is not that valuable, but as an experience it might be good, since school can both motivate you and grow your network. A couple of participants also mentioned that the education is free in Finland, which is rare compared to other countries. Additionally, many saw it as a community where you can learn from the others. Since feedback is crucial to artists, many saw that a school is a great place to receive that and share ideas.

*As education in Finland is free, it doesn't hurt to have one. If you're really young, still living at home, going to junior or high school, start to do modes. The moment you start to do modes, the minute you have portfolio material. You have actually game projects at that moment. But if you haven't done this, by all means go to school. At school you get contacts. Later you get more contacts when all your old school friends are working at different companies. (Joonas)*

*Personally, studying 3D helped me a lot. The teaching was quite modern and practical. They gave good advice about common mistakes, some things I wouldn't have figured out studying on my own. 3D modeling might be easy to learn on your own, without education. But animation, planning the movements and getting feedback from that, for that the education has been really good. (Heli)*

*If you have started before high school, you just might be so good that you don't need to study anywhere. But most people need the education just to mature. It's really important that you have this community from where you can get feedback and I want to emphasize that feedback is the best tool you can have. You have to get used to that from the start. Some can give really straight feedback that you will start to question your choice of career. Best way to develop yourself. (Tuomas)*

*Learning starts from you. Good thing about education and going to a place where there's lots of people and lots of ideas, is that the people from who you're going to learn most from are those who you study with. (Adriana)*

In the end, it really depends on the artist's personal interests and what he or she wants to learn. For some, education can be really helpful, others can learn better on their own. Getting an education in Finland is fortunately not dependent on one's income, so anyone can get an education as long as there is motivation. The degree itself does not have value, but the experience an artist will acquire can be significant. Being surrounded by likeminded people in the same situation can be motivational. Doing projects together and receiving constructive feedback is of incalculable value that one might not get on your own. This means that one should be active during studies and not expect the school to take care of one's career. Ultimately, it is the artist who has to decide what to get out of an education and how to use it.

5.2. Survey results

In this chapter I will present the results of the survey. I conducted the survey during the time period of approximately one month. By the end of the survey period, data had been collected from 90 individuals. The participants were not obliged to answer all the questions, but almost no one skipped any question.

5.2.1. PROFILE OF A TYPICAL GAME ARTIST

In the survey, I asked a few demographic questions, which were the participants age, nationality, gender, the highest educational degree earned, current occupation and how long they have worked in the game industry. I wanted to ask this to be able to compare the results to previous studies, such as the IGDA surveys and to get an overall view of the artists.

Based on the survey findings, a typical game artist in Finland is male, 30, has a Bachelor's degree, is employed and has over 4 years of experience in the game industry. While

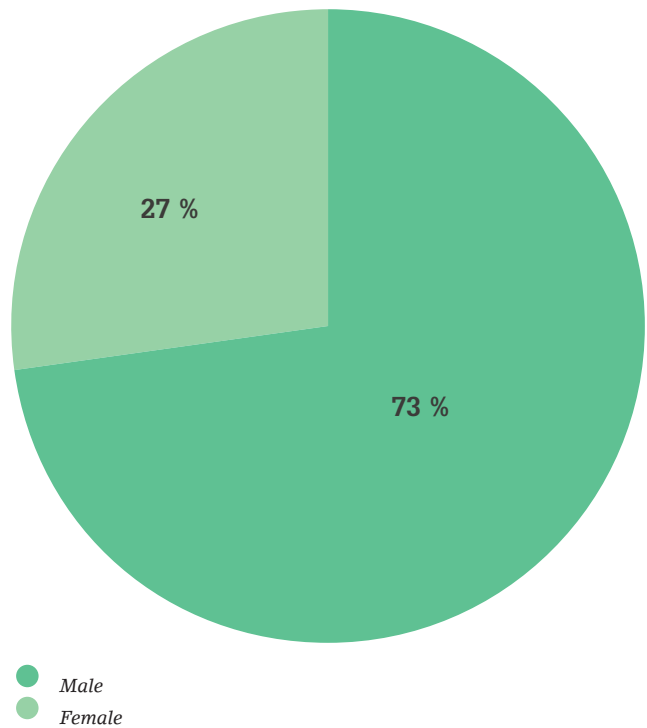


Table 5. The gender division of the survey participants

the majority (73%) of the participants were male, 27% was female (Table 5). One participants commented wondering why there was only binary gender choices. I realized later that the choices were too narrow and that it should have included other options. The average age of the participants was 30 years. The youngest one was 20 years old, while the oldest was 45. The female participants were a bit younger (28,5 years) than men (30,5 years). Table 6 shows the summary statistics of the survey participants' age distribution. Not surprising, most of the participants were Finnish, with a few (12%) foreigners; Russian (2), British, French, Slovak, Italian/Brazilian, Spanish, German, Pakistani, Russian/Finnish and Hungarian.

Females had on an average a higher educational level than men. As seen from Table 7, over half of the participants had a Bachelor's degree (56%). Two male participants with a High school education mentioned that they were studying for a higher degree, but dropped out. The foreigners had a very high level of education, with over 60% having a Bachelor's degree and 30% having a Master's degree.

A vast majority (78%) of the participants informed that they are currently employed (Table 8). Only around 6,5% were unemployed, while 4,5% were still studying. Nearly 8% marked themselves as self-employed, and 3% are working as freelancers. Interestingly, the six unemployed participants were all Finnish men. Four of them had a Bachelor's degree. In this survey, this is still a very small amount, or then the survey did not for some reason reach unemployed women. Likewise, the seven self-employed were all also Finnish men. Three of these got into the game industry by starting their own company.

The average number of years working in the industry

is 4.7 years. As can be seen from the Table 9, a third of the participants had 0-2 years of experience, while almost a quarter had 2-4 years of experience. The rest varied from 4 to 10 years, with a few exceptions over 10 years of experience. The most experienced one has 19 years of game industry behind him. According to the survey, he has never been unemployed.

From this data we can see that the correspondents are quite young with not much experience; there are some exceptions of course. Being male and having a Bachelor's degree is quite the norm according to the survey, but there is a good amount of female participants as well.

5.2.2. GETTING THE FIRST JOB

After the demographic questions, I asked the participants: "How did you get your first job at a game company?" Here, many skipped to choose one of the pre-provided choices and wrote their own answer. It is understandable that it can be hard to choose one specific reason, since it can be a combination of many elements and they want to give a more specific answer.

Of those who chose one of the pre-provided choices, got their first job through an internship or work-study program and through a friend (Table 10). Only one quarter said that they got their job through a job application, the traditional way of applying for a job. It is clear that internships are an excellent way of to get one's foot in the door. Almost as important is it to have contacts since so many got their first job through a friend.

Social media, such as belonging to a certain Facebook

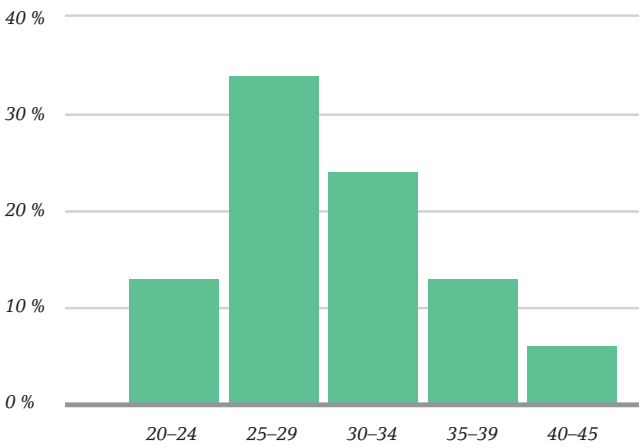


Table 6. The age distribution of the survey participants



or IRC<sup>1</sup> group can have a big impact on ones employment. Of all the foreign participants in the survey, 50% answered that they got employed through a friend, while only a couple applied to a job ad. The majority answered that they have sent open applications to companies, rather than applying for a job opening. Many commented that they contacted the company themselves, with some of them stating that they sent to as many companies as possible, or as one of the participants expressed “Vigorous job searching” (Female, 25). One interesting finding was that many mentioned how they got discovered or asked to come and work for the company, and often this happened through Facebook, forums or IRC. There were no significant differences between the female and male participants’ ways of getting employed.

- Employer saw my artwork on an art website (pingstate.nu). (Male, 31)*
- Heard a rumour about artists position being open even though company didn’t advertise it. (Male, 41)*
- I had just quit my previous work when the current employer said on IRC that they were searching for a employee (Female, 32)*
- Through a 3dolphin.fi forums. (Male, 27)*
- Lately Facebook has been an extremely effective way to show off your work through the groups that are specially made for the game industry (like concept art, 3d, etc.). In my case, my employer found me through Facebook and I’ve heard of many other similar occasions. (Male, 24)*

I was also interested in artists opinions of what they see to be important when searching for a job. To find this out, I asked “How useful are the following factors when applying for a job?”. They could rate on a scale from 1-5 (with 1 being not useful and 5 being very useful) the following factors: CV, online portfolio, social media profiles (e.g., LinkedIn), friends in the company, having connections in the industry, recommendations, being well known, Bachelor’s degree and Master’s degree.

It can be seen from the data in Table 11 that portfolio and connections are most useful factors when applying for a job. The participants clearly pointed out the importance of a strong portfolio with quality work. However, being well connected is as important. Many saw that having connections in the industry, being recommended or having friends in the

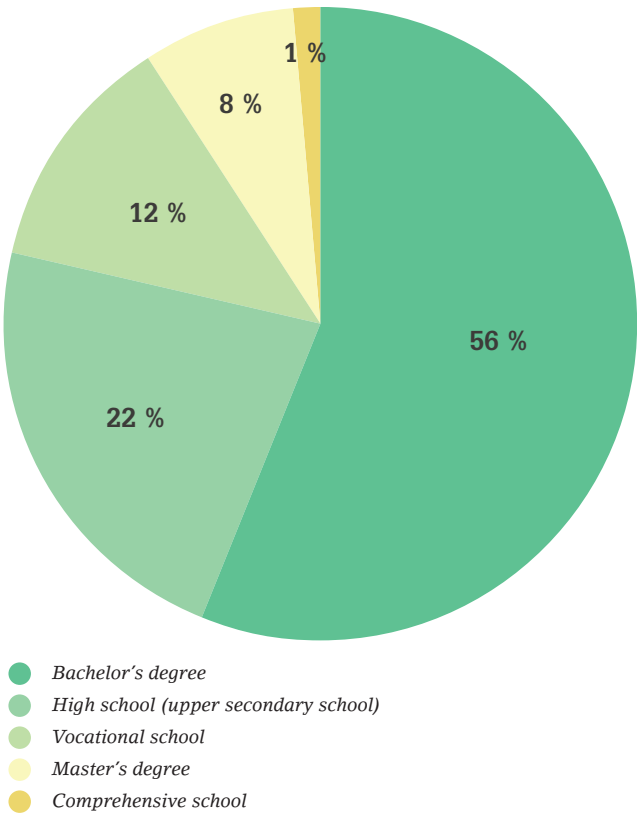


Table 7. The educational level of the survey participants

1 Internet Relay Chat (IRC) is a chat program

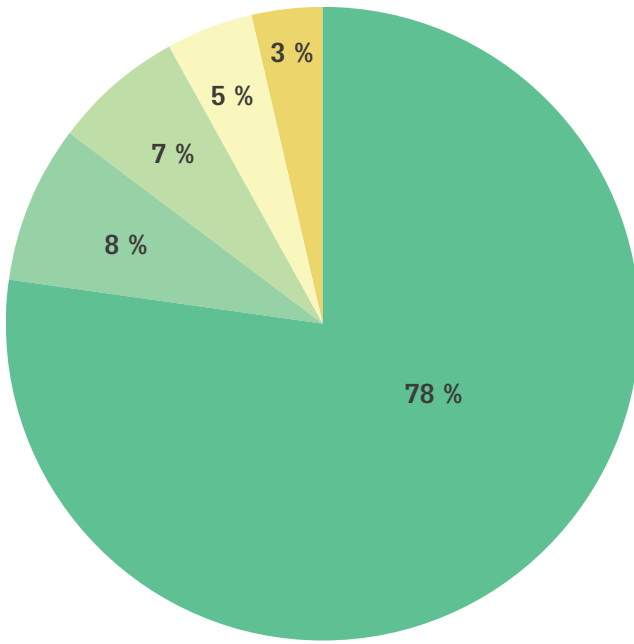


Table 8. Occupation of the survey participants

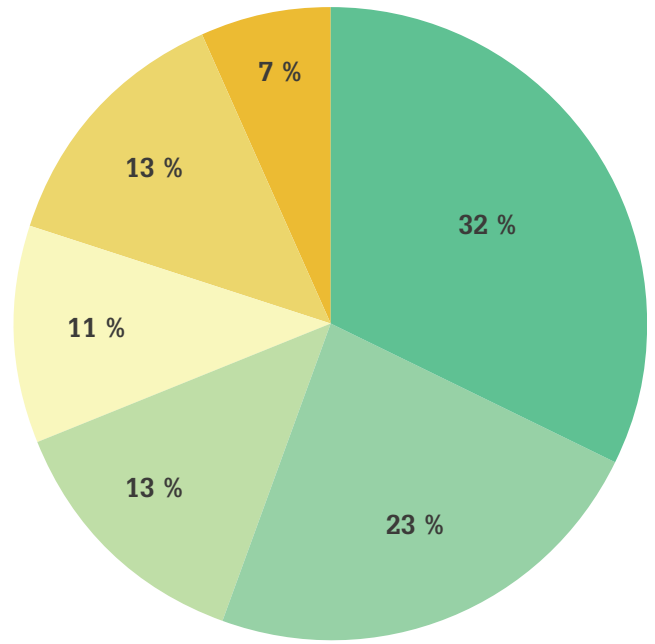
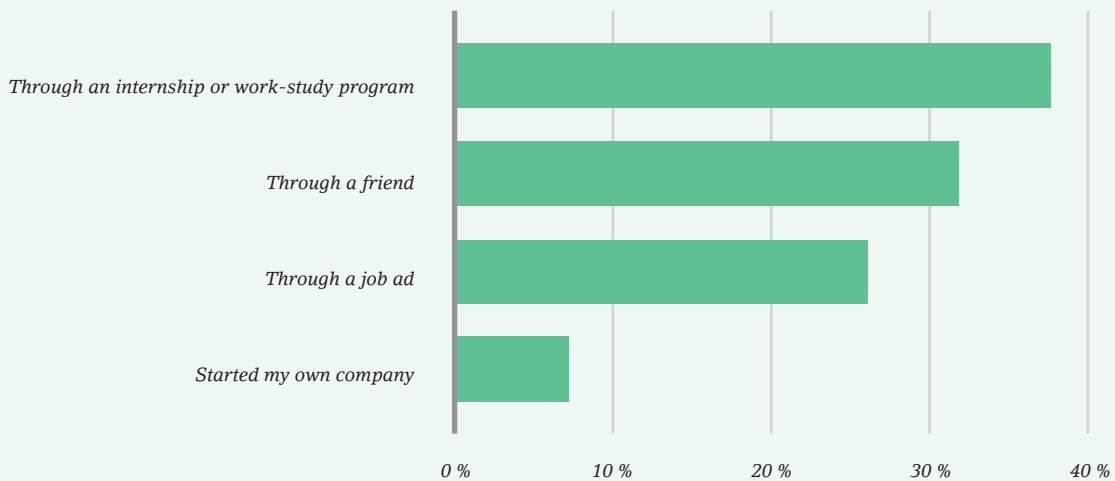


Table 9. The survey participants' years of experience in the game industry

Table 10. How the survey participants got their first job at a game company



company, being more useful than a CV. Also, being well known has its benefits, as one can be discovered as the participants had commented on before. Having a Bachelor's or Master's degree on the other hand, was not in the participants' opinion that useful. This question of the survey got a lot of comments, where the informants gave more thought on the answers:

*A degree might help sometimes in Finland but the main thing that matters is how good you are at what you do and who you know. Degrees might be very important if you want to work abroad though. (Male, 25)*

*Basically 2 things matter the most: 1. The level of quality of your work. 2. How well you get along in a team. Having a bad reputation on both, will hurt you. On the other hand if you're known to be great at even one of them, helps you a great deal. It's a small industry in Finland, so you'd better take your A-game to your first job, because you will get a reputation fast. If you feel like your art is not up to bar, you really need to make an effort to better yourself. Before you have a reputation, all you have to show for is your portfolio! (Male, 36)*

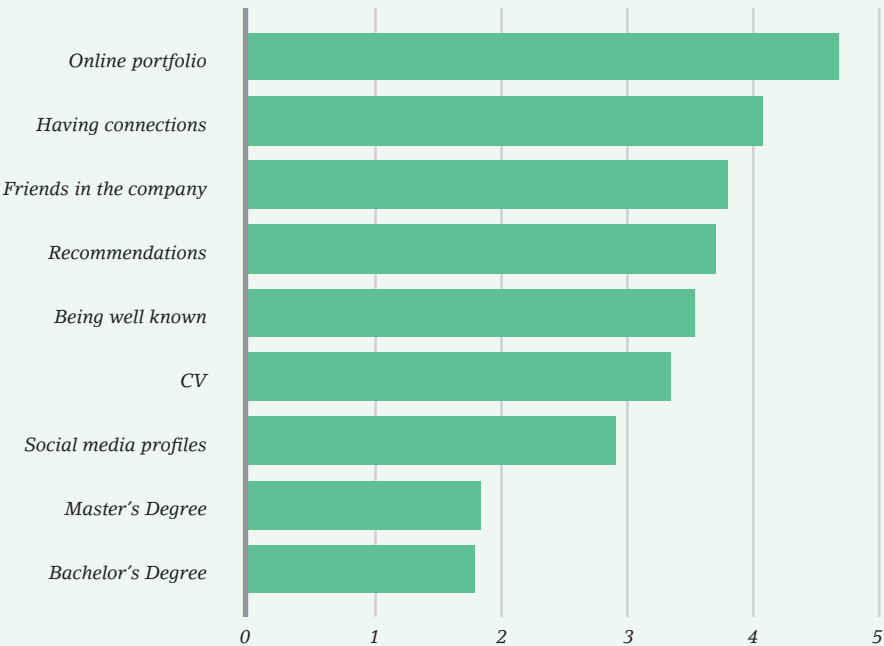
*Without contact inside the industry I'd probably never be noticed as an artist, no matter my education. (Female, 26)*

*I think your personality and the quality of work will be the most important things to a company, it doesn't matter that much if you have a degree or not. (Male, 25)*

*No portfolio = no job as an artist. (Female, 25)*

One did mention though that he did not have an online portfolio until recently (Male, 29), but has still been employed for over 3 years in the industry. One (Male, 25) mentioned that a degree might help you if you go abroad, but otherwise people did not see a degree being useful in the Finnish game industry. Those with a low degree mentioned that they have never had a problem with not having a higher degree. Personality and connections on the other hand have a big impact and can open doors, according to many of the informants.

Table 11. Useful factors when applying for a job  
(1= not useful, and 5 = very useful)





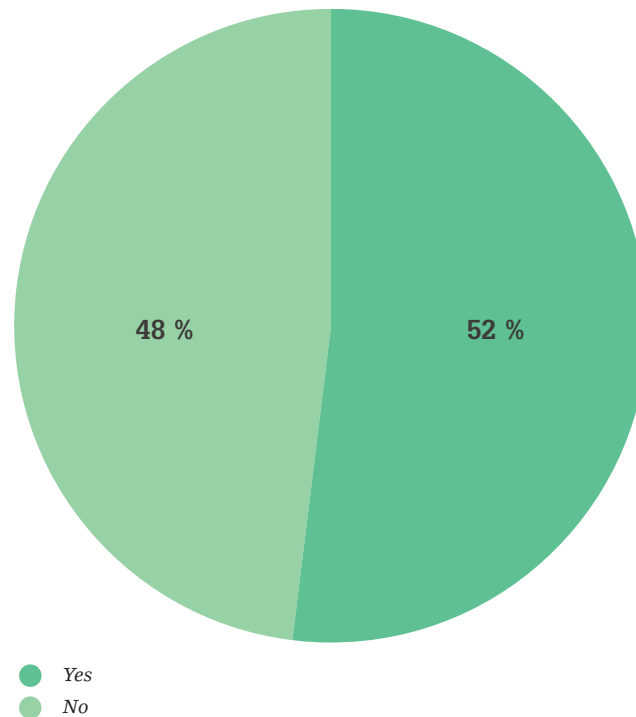


Table 12. The percentage of the survey participants who have at some point been unemployed

### 5.2.3. DIFFICULTIES IN GETTING EMPLOYED

Half of the participants have been at some point unemployed (Table 12), with the average of 8 months of unemployment. The longest unemployment lasted for 46 months (over 3.5 years) and the shortest for 3 weeks. 24% had been unemployed for 6 months. Fortunately, almost 80% those who have been unemployed, are now employed, with only about 11% being currently unemployed. On the other hand, the ones who are currently unemployed, have been without an occupation for or over a year. 80% of the artist currently employed, have not been unemployed for more than a year. Study years was not counted as unemployment months.

A number of issues were identified when applying for a job. As seen in Table 13, lack of experience and networks combined with hard competition is making it harder for game artists to get employed. Many were also uncertain about their own competence and stated that luck and timing can have a big impact on getting employed. Females were generally more uncertain about their skills than the male participants (Table 14). Over 30% of the female participants rated this

as an issue making it harder to get employed (5/5), while only 4,4% of the male's rated it as high.

However, discrimination caused from factors, such as gender or age, does not according to the artists exist, though two participants experienced that this had made it harder for them to get employed. Lack of education was not a problem for the artists, but many felt that they did not have a useless degree.

*Being a female can either work for you or against you, depending on the mentality of the company. Smaller "boy pack" companies do not seem to want to hire girls. Larger more international companies who realize it's valuable to have a more diverse group will be more prone to hire girls. (Female, 45)*

*Based on my experience education matters less and your skills more. Getting employed is easiest for a beginner through an internship/work study program (gamepro etc.) and after that it's all about your personality and work, knowing people is a huge plus. Online portfolio for artists is a must. (Male, 24)*

*Good portfolio is the most important thing, that an artist can have. Artists should not expect schools to teach necessary skill for employment. Rarely do the teachers have enough knowledge or experience to teach game art. (Talking about Finnish schools) Employers care most about the quality of your art, that is in your portfolio. After that the most important thing is your experience. Degree of any sort is usually just a nice bonus. (Male, 24)*

One issue that the participants mentioned in their comments, but that was not in the questions was employment contracts. Since many jobs are project based, as mentioned in chapter 2, the nature of contracts are often term-based.

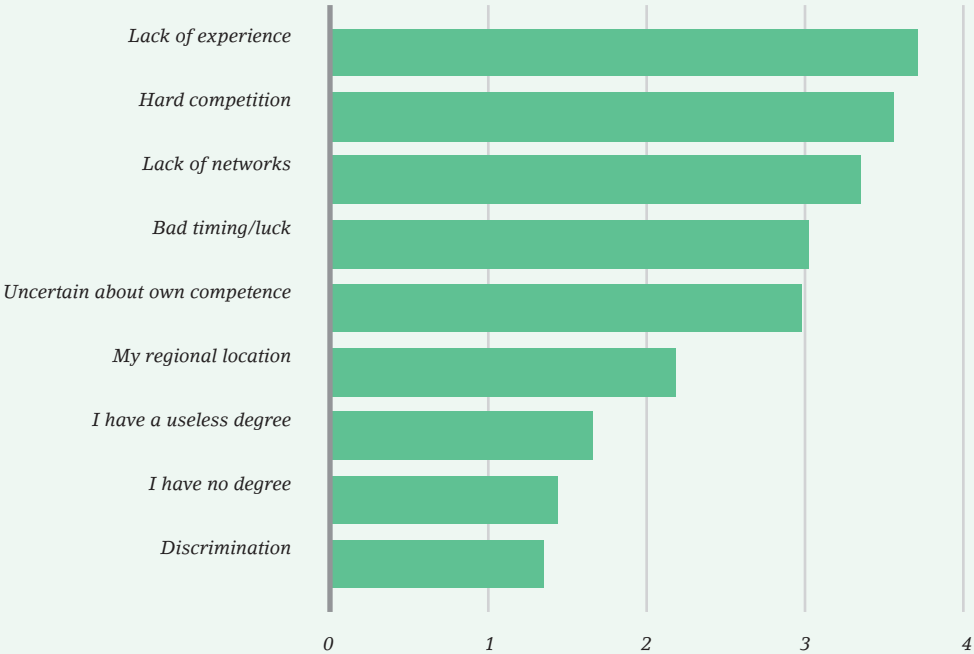
*The problem in France and most likely in Finland too, employers tends to give only temporary contracts. (Male, 27)*

*Getting a permanent contract is important as you can use that as grounds for getting a permanent contract elsewhere if you wish to change companies at some point. I've worked less than 2 years in the industry and managed to get from*

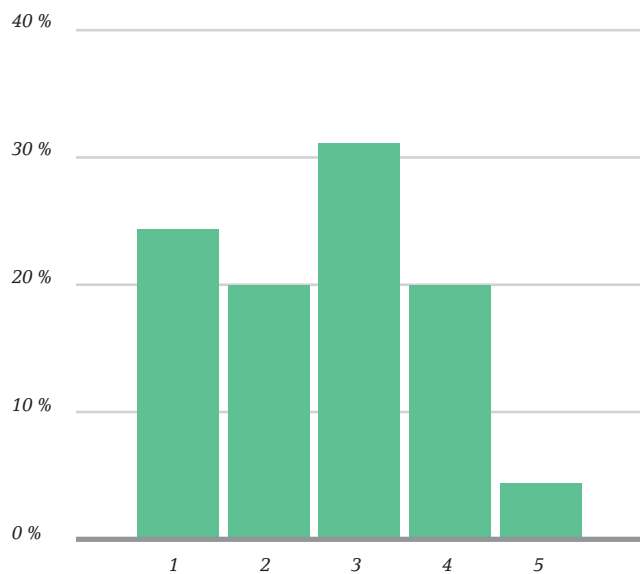
*an internship to a temporary employment contract followed by a permanent contract. When moving to another company they never even considered offering me a temporary contract for that reason. (Male, 25)*

In summary, these results show that the typical game artist in the Finnish game industry is currently employed. Luckily, there is a big chance of getting employed after unemployment, as long as it does not last for too long. A common view amongst informants was that the combination of a good portfolio and connections was seen as the key to get employed. Here, degrees were not seen as an important assets in getting employed. Many indicated that lack of experience and networks makes it harder to get employed.

Table 13. Factors that have made it harder to find employment  
(1= has not made it harder at all, and 5 = has made it much harder)



Male's rating



Female's rating

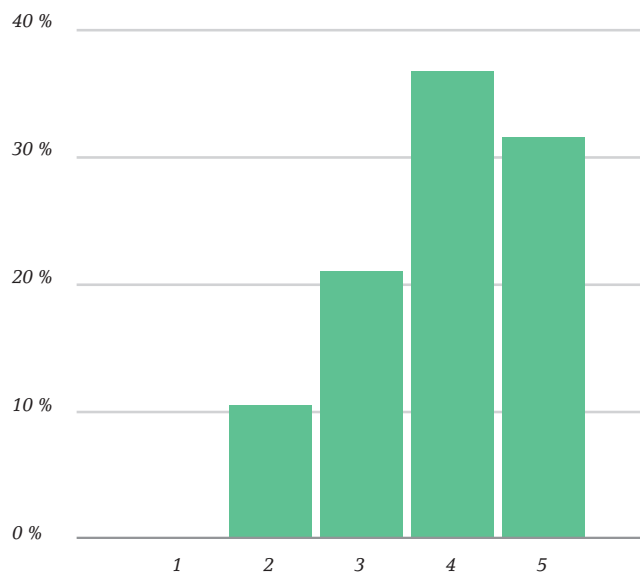


Table 14. The female participants were more uncertain about their skills than the male participants.



# Discussion

## 6.

The initial objective of this study was to find out the artists' methods of finding employment and thoughts about being an artist in the industry. To find this out, I conducted seven interviews and a survey with 90 artists in Finland's game industry. In this discussion, I will analyze the results of the interviews and survey and see how they support earlier studies.

The first research question in this study sought to determine how visual artists find employment in the Finnish game industry. To discover this, I asked how the participants acquired their first job in the industry. Many similarities were found between my findings and the literature.

Most artists get their first position of employment through internships in the Finnish game industry. How this internship is gained varies. Often the artist contacts the company on their own or already know someone from the company. Internships commonly lead to employment in the same company. The second factor for getting employed is through

contacts. As the participants pointed out, the industry is small and people know each other. Employers even ask their current employees for recommendations. Some even commented that without contacts, they would not have been employed. The third most common way of getting employed, is simply by contacting the company by sending an application. Here, activity is important. Naturally, getting a job is not this straightforward, but has many leading factors that should be taken in consideration. This takes us to the second research questions: how do the artists use their portfolio, connections and education as tools when applying for a job?

The portfolio is without doubt an artist's most powerful tool. Both in the interviews and survey, participants emphasized the quality and focus of the portfolio when applying for a job. It has to include the artist's best work and nothing else. However, even if the portfolio is great on its own, it has to fit the possible occupation. An artist

won't land a job simply because he or she is talented, but has to also be a good fit to the position and company. The portfolio must also be visible online and preferably shared in online forums or social media. This also gives opportunity to receive feedback, both from fellow artists and people outside the industry. Feedback was seen as important in an artist's life. Constructive criticism can develop an artist further, sometimes works as a motivator and can also facilitate reflective moments of seeing things from another perspective. These results match those observed in earlier studies (Brathwaite and Schreibe, 2012; Adams, 2013), which was expected. However, one finding emerged that was not present in the previous studies: experienced artists with quality portfolios, who are yet unemployed.

As Michail pointed out in the interview, he had a hard time understanding the importance of the portfolio, since it did not take him anywhere. He had originally been discovered through his portfolio and invited to work in Finland. During the interview, he was desperate to find a job, with a portfolio that was even stronger than before. He believed, that the reason for his unemployment was his reputation. Michail had also witnessed people with weaker portfolios getting employed, because the artist and employer knew each other. These findings may help to understand that being talented is not always the key to success, as a lot of literature has stated. This might be explained by Finland's close game developer community, where everyone knows each other. The majority of the related literature is from the USA, where the industry is considerably bigger. Further research is required to understand experienced artists who are unemployed and how to get them employed. Especially since layoffs in the game industry are normal in Finland's current financial situation.

This takes us to the next method: connections. The participants saw a significant advantage in knowing people in the game companies. As seen in the survey results, many got their previous and current positions through a friend. This could be explained by the fact that people hear about new positions before they even get posted in public. This is backed up by Adams (2013) who had similar findings. Social skills are thus important and many stated that an artist's personality can also be beneficial. Some even thought the personality being as important as the portfolio. Information of new positions go often through social media such as Facebook or chats. This was also mentioned by Brathwaite (2012) who have hired people based on their social media activity. Still, many survey informants did not see it necessary (2.9/5) to be on social media. However, for some this can be a very important factor. Adriana saw Facebook as one of her main tools to advertise her art and acquire new contacts. Here, the correlation between the portfolio's visibility and use of social media can be seen. The link of the online portfolio can be easily shared through social media and

thus make it more accessible. This will also make the artist more known, which was rated as a useful factor (3.6/5) in the survey. Hence, it can be suggested that being present in social media could make an artist more known, leading to an empowered online portfolio, thus increasing the possibility of employment.

Education proved to be a factor with many viewpoints, both in the literature and my findings. One thing is clear, a degree is usually not a requirement in artist positions which might be the reason for questioning the importance of education. In the interviews, some saw that it is more useful to spend time in training oneself, rather than being at school. It was also mentioned that education is behind the industry standards. This was also noted in the literature (Neogames, 2008). Over half of the survey participants had a Bachelor's degree, but still this degree was rated as not useful (1.8/5), also by those with a degree. A couple of informants' views on education had a negative tone, implying that an artist that is at school is not motivated enough. The reason for this is not clear, but it may have something to do with game education being still in development and thus not yet appreciated. It is important to bear in mind the possible bias in these responses. The interviewees with a contradictory view on education had not experienced the currently offered education and have a degree that is not related to the game industry. It thus can be suggested that they do not see much benefit in their education, nor in game education generally. However, they were highly motivated to strengthen their skills on their own time, which might suggest that an educational institute would not suit their type of personality.

In contrast, interview participants who found meaning in their education, had a more positive outlook on education. They appreciated the contacts and community in their institute and the motivation and skills obtained at courses. The connections the artist gains in school might be useful later, when the fellow graduates are working at various game companies. A community of same-minded people is also seen as a great environment to get feedback from. Additionally, only one of the seven interviewees knew that she wanted to work in the game industry before applying to the School of Applied Sciences. Hence, education can also give direction to an artist's occupation. This was not noted in the literature. A possible explanation for this could be that the literature was presented to an audience, who already wanted to work in the game industry.

Rather than seeing education as being equally important as the artist's portfolio and connections, it can have a supportive role. By working in a motivational environment with other artists, while gaining useful feedback of one's work, increases the value of the portfolio. Networking is present at educational institutes, increasing the artist's amount in connections. If these are already gained before,

as for the two interviewees, an education might not be that useful for the artist.

The participants presented also the problems in getting a job. Unemployment was clearly stated as an upsetting situation that no one wants to find themselves in. Many seek after more experience, but the competition is hard with so many other artists with more experience. Lack of experience might be the reason for shortage in contacts, which is common for younger artists. The message from the participants for the unemployed was not to give up, but continue to work on one's skills and being active by participating in events to get connected.

Surprisingly, internship opportunities through education was not discussed in the interviews and survey as much as in the literature. Edge-Online (2014) discussed how game companies have student-focused recruitment, creating more internship positions. Nearly 40% of the survey participants and 4 of 7 interviewees got their first job through an internship or work-study program. However, it was not discussed if these were through an educational institute and how much did the school help with the application. This can vary depending on the school. Nevertheless, internships are generally required in educational programs in Finland, thus there is a connection between education and internships. How strong the correlation is regarding game artists in this study, remains unanswered. Another contradictory with the literature that mainly relies on information from the USA is the majority of students in Finland are free from tuition fees.

Therefore, it could conceivably be hypothesized that an artist's portfolio and connections are the two key factors in getting employed. Either one can be the first step to a job depending on how an artist uses them. Education might be the right tool for building a stronger portfolio and bringing more connections, if the artist is lacking in these. It is important for an artist to understand this equation, especially when being unemployed. Many solely depend on their portfolio, underestimating the power of connections. Often, education is seen as useless and as a waste of time. Self-driven and motivated artists can develop their skills on their own time, but this is not the case for everyone. As stated before, being unemployed is extremely exhausting for an artist and thus education can have a huge motivational impact. Since everyone learns differently, there is no model that would work for all. An artist must solely understand the available tools, and try what works best for him or her.

It was clear from the interviews that the artists have been actively drawing and practicing their skills since childhood. During that time, many got recognized by their skills and motivated them to draw more. Artists usually start with drawing and games as a hobby before having it as a profession. Since it has been a part of the artist already before joining the game industry, artists are very passionate of what they do. The older participants have experience in

related industries, such as the animation industry, before entering the game industry. Thus, it is also possible to join the game industry later. Since the industry is young, there are only a few experienced artists. On average, a game artist has under five years of game industry experience. This is likely to increase, as the industry develops and gets older.

Unexpected differences between male and female artists were not found. The only finding was that female artists are more uncertain about their own competence, according to the survey. While this has not been discussed in the literature review, it has been mentioned in Anttila's (2014, p. 3) article that "[Women] have had no *problems* fitting in at their workplaces. . . . However, a few have had *concerns* about fitting in." Anttila (2014) suggests that it is hard for women to identify themselves as employees in a male-dominated industry. This could correlate to the fact that there were not many females in the demo scene (Saarikoski, 2004). However, being the only significant contrast between female and male artists and not a key topic in this study, discussing it further would not be fruitful.

As mentioned, it has been estimated that 25% of Finland's game industry's workforce is foreign. According to my survey, the number of foreign artists in the Finnish game industry is small (12%), but still important to observe. Compared to the Finnish artists, foreign artists had a very high level of education. Many of them had a Master's degree. One explanation for this could be that they came to Finland to study and then got employed. Again, no significant difference between Finnish and foreign artists was found, but this might be due to the low amount of foreign informants. Further research should be done to investigate the foreign game artists in Finland.





# Conclusion

## 7.

The aim of this study was to explore how artists in the Finnish game industry find employment and their thoughts about artists' employment in the industry. The role of the portfolio, connections and education were also examined. The focus was on visual artists, since they represent one-fifth of the game employees in Finland and is a dream job for many drawing and gaming enthusiasts. The focus was also decided by the fact that I am an artist myself. My research method was semi-structured interviews combined with a survey. Seven interviewees and 90 survey informants participated in this study. In this thesis, the findings are seen from an artist's point of view, rather than the game companies perspective. The goal was to give more attention to the employees in the industry, empower those who are in the beginning of their career and extend the knowledge of artists in the Finnish game industry.

This study has shown that most artists in the Finnish game industry get employed through internships and by using their

connections. The following conclusions can be drawn from the present study: by having a solid portfolio and connections in the game industry, an artist has a good chance of getting employed. However, artists new to the industry often lack contacts. Acquiring contacts could thus be suggested to be highest priority, right after compiling a focused portfolio. If the artist is lacking both in skills and connections, education might be a way to improve these traits. Portfolio building and networking should constantly be practiced, even during employment.

These findings enhance our understanding of the artists in the Finnish game industry. They are passionate about their work and want to contribute to the industry. Games and artistic interests have been major parts of the artists' childhoods, making them not only dear hobbies, but also paths to their careers. The artist community is crucial for them. Interacting through social media or at events is important for them in their development. The first job is also a pivotal moment, since it

sets the direction for the future. Consequently, being without a job is fatiguing. Without a job it is hard to gain meaningful industry experience.

The findings of this investigation complement those of earlier studies, which have not studied the artists as closely. The results of this research support the idea that an artist has to have both artistic and social skills to increase the opportunity of employment. The key strengths of this study is finding the high employment rate through internships and how education might help the artists to find its role and even the whole game industry. One interesting finding was that a good portfolio might not always save an artist from unemployment, which the previous studies did not indicate. The research extended our knowledge of the artists in Finland and has thus theoretical significance that can be used in future studies. Although this study focuses on the artists in the industry, the findings may be applicable to other game industry employees as well.

The generalizability of these results is subject to certain limitations. For instance, the current study has only examined how artists acquire their first job. It does not take in consideration how to get re-employed after unemployment, or how to switch jobs. Also, how to shift from one industry to the game industry is not discussed, even though three of the interviewees originally were not working in the game industry. I only scratched the surface on education's impact on game artists, which could be examined more closely.

The limitations in this work opens up possibilities for future research to build on. More research is needed to better understand the game artists in different stages of their careers. One group that definitely needs more attention are the unemployed artists, both those who are in the beginning of their careers and experienced ones, like Michail. Since internships were the most common way of getting the first job, the way internships are gained, should be investigated more. It would be interesting to assess the effects of education on internships and employment in general.

The findings of this study have a number of practical implications. First, it might inspire artists to closely analyze their situation, whether they would be employed, unemployed or studying, and empower them to take action. It also gives information for those who are thinking of a career as an artist in the game industry. Second, I hope this study will also motivate further research in this subject and for them to take an interest in the artists and other employees of the game industry. Third, I hope this study drives educational institutes and artists to collaborate to develop the curriculum further.

I see that this study serves as a noteworthy introduction to the topic of game artists, their thoughts and employment circumstances. This is the first study to investigate general game artists. I hope this study empowers artists in their early careers and makes them more visible and appreciated. I also hope to inspire people to study the subject more, do more interviews, compare, question and discuss.





# References

- Adams, E. (2003). Break into the game industry: How to get a job making video games. Emeryville, CA: McGraw-Hill/Osborne.
- Anttila, H. (2014). Women in the Finnish Video Game Industry. [online] Available at: <http://www15.uta.fi/FAST/FIN/A14PAPS/ha-video.pdf> [Accessed 19 Mar. 2015].
- Baron, C. (2010). Designing a Digital Portfolio. Indianapolis, Ind.: New Riders Publishing.
- Borg, S. (n.d.). Kyselylomakkeen laatiminen - KvantiMOTV. [online] Fsd.uta.fi. Available at: <http://www.fsd.uta.fi/menetelmaopetus/kyselylomake/laatiminen.html> [Accessed 6 Feb. 2015].
- Brathwaite, B. and Schreiber, I. (2012). Breaking into the game industry. Boston, MA.: Course Technology, Cengage Learning.
- Clazie, I. (2010). Creating your digital portfolio. Cincinnati, Ohio: HOW Books.
- Deuze, M., Martin, C.B., and Allen, C. (2007). The professional identity of game workers. Convergence: The international journal of research into new media technologies, 13 (4), pp.335-353.
- Digital Tutors. (n.d.). Portfolio Tips > Digital-Tutors. [online] Available at: <http://www.digitaltutors.com/11/portfolio.php> [Accessed 6 Feb. 2015].
- Duffy, J. (2007). Game Art and Animation, An Introduction. [online] Gamecareerguide.com. Available at: [http://www.gamecareerguide.com/features/413/game\\_art\\_and\\_animation\\_an\\_introduction.php](http://www.gamecareerguide.com/features/413/game_art_and_animation_an_introduction.php) [Accessed 6 Feb. 2015].
- Edge Online. (2014). Get Into Games: Epic opens its first ever Games Centre at Staffordshire University - Edge Online. [online] Available at: <http://www.edge-online.com/get-into-games/get-into-games-epic-opens-its-first-ever-games-centre-at-staffordshire-university/> [Accessed 7 Feb. 2015].
- Eskola, J. and Suoranta J. (2000). Johdatus laadulliseen tutkimukseen. Tampere: Vastpaino.
- Forret, M. and Dougherty, T. (2004). Networking behaviors and career outcomes: differences for men and women?. J. Organiz. Behav., [online] 25(3), pp.419-437. Available at: <http://www.psychsavvy.com.au/PDFS/GenderNetworking.pdf> [Accessed 7 Feb. 2015].
- Granqvist, N. (2004, April 2-3). New Industry Creation in Knowledge-Driven Businesses – Case Mobile Games Industry in Finland. Paper presented at “The Fifth Conference on Organizational Knowledge, Learning, and Capabilities”, Innsbruck, Austria.
- Handrahan, M. (2014). Education vs. Vocation. [online] GamesIndustry.biz. Available at: <http://www.gamesindustry.biz/articles/2014-04-17-education-vs-vocation> [Accessed 7 Feb. 2015].
- Hirsjärvi, S. and Hurme, H. (2000). Tutkimushaastattelu: Teemahaastattelun teoria ja käytäntö. Helsinki: Yliopistopaino.
- Hirsjärvi, S. Remes, P. and Sajavaara, P. (2007). Tutki ja kirjoita. Helsinki: Tammi.
- Hoffman, E. (2015). EA: The Human Story. [Blog] ea\_spouse. Available at: <http://ea-spouse.livejournal.com/274.html> [Accessed 6 Feb. 2015].
- Holopainen, H. (2014). Kuumalle pelialalle valmistuu osaajia liian hitaasti. [online] Yle Uutiset. Available at: [http://yle.fi/uutiset/kuumalle\\_pelialalle\\_valmistuu\\_osaajia\\_liian\\_hitaasti/7096635](http://yle.fi/uutiset/kuumalle_pelialalle_valmistuu_osaajia_liian_hitaasti/7096635) [Accessed 6 Feb. 2015].
- IGDA, (2004). Quality of Life in the Game Industry: Challenges and Best Practices. [online] International Game Developer's Association. Available at: [http://gameqol.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/IGDA\\_QualityOfLife\\_WhitePaper.pdf](http://gameqol.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/IGDA_QualityOfLife_WhitePaper.pdf) [Accessed 6 Feb. 2015].

- IGDA. (2005). Game Developer Demographics: An Exploration of Workforce Diversity. [online] International Game Developer's Association pp.4-20. Available at: [http://www.itu.dk/~lyngvig/MTG%20Project/IGDA\\_DeveloperDemographics\\_Oct05.pdf](http://www.itu.dk/~lyngvig/MTG%20Project/IGDA_DeveloperDemographics_Oct05.pdf) [Accessed 6 Feb. 2015].
- IGDA. (2014). Developer Satisfaction Survey 2014 - Summary report. [online] International Game Developer's Association, pp.1-36. Available at: [http://gameqol.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/IGDA%20DSS%202014-Summary%20Report\\_released.pdf](http://gameqol.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/IGDA%20DSS%202014-Summary%20Report_released.pdf) [Accessed 6 Feb. 2015].
- Kazemi, D. (2005). Effective Networking in the Games Industry (Introduction). [Blog] Tiny Subversions. Available at: <http://tinysubversions.com/2005/10/effective-networking-in-the-games-industry-introduction/> [Accessed 7 Feb. 2015].
- Keller, M. (2010). Design matters: Portfolios 01: An Essential Primer for Today's Competitive Market. Beverly, Massachusetts: Rockport Publishers.
- Kennedy, S. (2013). How to become a video game artist. New York: Watson-Guption Publications.
- Kerr, A. (2010). The Culture of Gamework. In: Mark Deuze (Ed.), Managing Media Work. London (etc.): Sage.
- Kuokkanen, K. (2015). Korkeakoulutettujen työpäivä on paisuu. Helsingin Sanomat. [online] Available at: <http://www.hs.fi/kaupunki/a1404014984045> [Accessed 6 Feb. 2015].
- Laakso, V. (2014). Peliala metsästää osaajia kissojen ja koirien kanssa. Yle. [online] Available at: [http://yle.fi/uutiset/peliala\\_metsastaa\\_osaajia\\_kissojen\\_ja\\_koirien\\_kanssa/7056171](http://yle.fi/uutiset/peliala_metsastaa_osaajia_kissojen_ja_koirien_kanssa/7056171) [Accessed 4 Mar. 2015].
- Levine, A. (2013). Networking: It's more than sharing meatballs. Physics Today. [online] Available at: <http://scitation.aip.org/content/aip/magazine/physicstoday/news/10.1063/PT.4.2427> [Accessed 7 Feb. 2015].
- Massey, D. (2006). 'Working in Games', The Escapist 61. [online] Available from: [http://www.escapistmagazine.com/articles/view/issues/issue\\_61/361-Working-in-Games](http://www.escapistmagazine.com/articles/view/issues/issue_61/361-Working-in-Games) [Accessed 6 Feb. 2015].
- Muehl, W. and Novak, J. (2008). Game development essentials. Clifton Park, NY: Thomson / Delmar Learning.
- Neogames. (2008). Suomen pelialan koulutustarpeet. Tampere: Uudenmaan TE-Keskus/ SILE-projekti.
- Neogames. (2011). The Finnish games industry. [online] Neogames. Available at: <http://www.neogames.fi/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Finnish-Games-Industry-2010-2011.pdf> [Accessed 6 Feb. 2015].
- Neogames. (2014). The Game Industry of Finland. [online] Neogames. Available at: [http://www.neogames.fi/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/TGIOF\\_esite\\_2014\\_uudet\\_web.pdf](http://www.neogames.fi/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/TGIOF_esite_2014_uudet_web.pdf) [Accessed 6 Feb. 2015].
- Neogames. (2015) The Game Industry of Finland. [online] Neogames. Available at: [http://www.neogames.fi/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Neogames\\_report2015\\_full.pdf](http://www.neogames.fi/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Neogames_report2015_full.pdf) [Accessed 24 Feb. 2015].
- Novak, J. (2008). Game development essentials: an introduction. Clifton Park, NY: Delmar Cengage Learning.
- Ranta, E. (2013). Voiko koulu tuottaa vain keskivertokoodarin? Taloussanomat. [online] Available at: <http://www.taloussanomat.fi/tyo-ja-koulutus/2013/11/19/voiko-koulu-tuottaa-vain-keskivertokoodarin/201315714/139> [Accessed 6 Feb. 2015].
- Roininen, T. (2013). The quality of life in the Finnish game industry. Master's Thesis. University of Jyväskylä.
- Saarikoski, P. (2004). Koneen lumo. Jyväskylä: Jyväskylän yliopisto.
- Saarikoski, P. and Suominen, J. (2009). Computer Hobbyists and the Gaming Industry in Finland. IEEE Annals of the History of Computing , 31(3), pp.20-33.
- Wilhelmsson, J. (2014). Generation 64 : Commodore 64 gjorde mig till den jag är. Malmö: Bokfabriken.



# Appendices

Appendix 1. The interview questions that were presented in varying form to the interviewed artists.

## Interview questions:

### PERSONAL HISTORY

1. Tell a little bit about your background.
2. Describe the reason why you wanted to work in games. When did this occur to you?

### PERSONAL WORKING HISTORY

3. Describe how you got your current position
4. Did you make any changes in your way of applying for jobs?
5. Tell a story about a challenging moment in your pursuit for a job.
6. Tell a story about a key moment in your career, in which way was it important to you?

### ARTISTS IN THE FINNISH GAME INDUSTRY

7. How do you think artists get their jobs in the game industry?
8. What role does a portfolio have?
9. What role does education have?
10. What role does connections have?

### PERSONAL ADVICE

11. Share your knowledge; give 3 tips to those who want to work in the industry.



## APPENDIX 2. THE SURVEY THAT WAS SHARED ON SOCIAL MEDIA AND SENT DIRECTLY TO GAME COMPANIES.

Dear participants,

I am a New Media Design and Production student at Aalto University and will write my Master's Thesis of how artists get employed in the Finnish game industry. I will collect data through this survey. Additionally, I will interview artists from a few game companies, asking what they did to get their position and if they have tips to share. The survey's aim is to get an overview of the situation and the interviews will give a more personal insight into the topic. The main goal of the thesis is to inspire people who dream of working as an artist in the game industry.

Please answer only if you are currently or have been working in the Finnish game industry as an artist. All respondents will be treated anonymously.

Thank you for participating in the survey!

Feel free to send questions or comments to me by mail or fill the comment field in the end of this survey.

Nelly Sääksjärvi

nelly.saaksjarvi@aalto.fi

<http://medialab.aalto.fi/>

### 1. PLEASE ENTER YOUR

Age: \_\_\_\_

Gender (male/female): \_\_\_\_\_

Nationality: \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. CURRENTLY, WHAT IS YOUR HIGHEST EDUCATIONAL DEGREE EARNED?

- Comprehensive school
- Vocational school
- High school (upper secondary school)
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- PhD
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

### 3. WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING BEST DESCRIBES YOUR CURRENT OCCUPATION?

- Employed
- Unemployed
- Studying
- Freelancer
- Self-employed
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. HOW DID YOU GET YOUR FIRST JOB AT A GAME COMPANY?

- Started my own company
- Through a friend
- Through a job fair
- Through a job ad
- Through an internship or work-study program
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

5. HOW LONG HAVE YOU WORKED IN THE GAME INDUSTRY? FREELANCER WORKS ALSO COUNTS.

Years \_\_\_\_\_  
Months \_\_\_\_\_

6. HOW USEFUL ARE THE FOLLOWING FACTORS WHEN APPLYING FOR A JOB  
(ON A SCALE FROM 1-5, WITH 1= NOT USEFUL, AND 5 = VERY USEFUL)?

- CV
  - Online portfolio
  - Social media profiles (e.g. LinkedIn)
  - Friends in the company
  - Having connections in the industry
  - Recommendations
  - Being well known
  - Bachelor's Degree
  - Master's Degree
- Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

7. HAVE YOU AT SOME POINT BEEN UNEMPLOYED?

- No
  - Yes
- If yes, how long (months)? \_\_\_\_\_

8. IF YOU HAVE HAD PROBLEMS GETTING EMPLOYED, PLEASE SPECIFY HOW MUCH YOU THINK THE FOLLOWING  
FACTORS HAVE MADE IT HARDER

(ON A SCALE FROM 1-5, WITH 1= HAS NOT MADE IT HARDER AT ALL, AND 5 = HAS MADE IT MUCH HARDER)?

- Lack of experience
  - Uncertain about own competence
  - Lack of networks
  - I have no degree
  - I have a useless degree
  - My regional location
  - Discrimination (because of e.g. gender, age etc.)
  - Hard competition
  - Bad timing/luck
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

9. FEEL FREE TO COMMENT OR SAY ANYTHING THAT'S ON YOUR MIND:

---

---

---

---



